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THE DIVINE LIBRARY
OF THE
OLD TESTAMENT

" As we are in no sort judges beforehand, by what laws or rules, in what degree, or by what means it were to have been expected that God would naturally instruct us ; so upon supposition of His affording us light and instruction by revelation, additional to what He has afforded us by reason and experience, we are in no sort judges by what methods and in what proportion it were to be expected that this supernatural light and instruction would be afforded us. . . .

" Neither obscurity nor seeming inaccuracy of style, nor various readings, nor early disputes about the authors of particular parts, nor any other things of the like kind, though they had been much more considerable in degree than they are, could overthrow the authority of the Scripture ; unless the Prophets, Apostles, or our Lord, had promised that the book containing the Divine revelation should be secure from those things."—Bishop Butler, *Analogy*, Part ii. ch. 3.

THE DIVINE LIBRARY

OF THE

OLD TESTAMENT

ITS ORIGIN, PRESERVATION, INSPIRATION, AND
PERMANENT VALUE

FIVE LECTURES

BY

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PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION

OF the Lectures contained in this volume four were delivered in the Cathedral of St. Asaph, at the invitation of the Dean and Chapter, to a gathering of clergy and laity from different parts of the Diocese, in Whitsun week of 1891. The third Lecture is one of a course given at Ely in 1885, with reference to the appearance of the Revised Version of the Old Testament. I have added it here, as I had originally intended to include the subject of the Preservation of the Old Testament in the course of Lectures at St. Asaph, and it forms a natural sequel to the two Lectures on the Origin of the Old Testament.

The Lectures are now published in accordance with a wish expressed by some of those who heard them at St. Asaph, and in the hope that they may be a contribution, however humble, towards the propagation, I will not say of right opinion, but of a right temper and attitude, with reference to the questions which are exercising the mind of the Church at the present time with regard to the Old Testament. The spirit in which these

questions are approached is more important than an immediate solution of them; and I rejoice to think that there are abundant and increasing signs of the spread of a right and wise spirit.¹ Solutions of some of the questions at issue can only come with time, after patient examination and re-examination of the evidence, and—I will venture to say—after first-hand investigations carried on independently by English scholars from every possible point of view; for which, alas! so few have the necessary ability, taste, training, and leisure in combination.

Meanwhile the temper and attitude of the Church, and especially of the clergy, are of prime importance for the future of the Church and of Belief. The attempt to decry the critical study of the Old Testament on *a priori* grounds can only prove mischievous in the end. The intelligent Christian will not say, “These views are contrary to my theory of inspiration,” or “They are incompatible with this or that dogma, and therefore they cannot be true”; but “Are these views grounded upon facts? and if so how must I modify the theory, or qualify the inferences I have drawn from the dogma, and perhaps re-state it?” Their apparent opposition to what we have received to hold may be good reason for special caution and reserve in accepting new ideas, but it is idle to invoke dogma to defeat critical and historical research, conducted upon sound principles, and limited to its proper sphere.

¹ See Note A.

Some words of that great theologian Döllinger may well be applied to the study of the Old Testament at the present moment.

“The work of a true theologian is to dig deep, to examine with restless assiduity, and not to draw back in terror should his investigation lead to conclusions that are unwelcome or inconsistent with preconceived notions or favourite views. . . . It is a law as valid for the future as for the past that in theology we can only through mistakes attain to truth. . . . Use none but scientific weapons in philosophical and theological inquiries, banish . . . all denunciation and holding up to suspicion of those who differ from us.”¹

I have endeavoured in these Lectures to state and illustrate some fundamental principles which are helpful to myself, and I trust may be helpful to others, though they only form as it were a standing ground from which to survey more difficult questions.

On the one hand, no devout Christian who believes the facts of the Incarnation and Resurrection can possibly regard Christianity as merely one among the great religions of the world; or view the religion of Israel, which formed the preparation for it, as merely a natural development out of the consciousness of a naturally religious people. He must hold fast without wavering to the conviction that Chris-

¹ Quoted in the Preface to Oxenham’s translation of *The First Age of the Church*.

tianity occupies a wholly unique place in the history of religions ; that it is not merely somewhat superior to other religions, but differs from them in kind, as being God's supreme and final revelation of Himself to mankind in His Son. He must hold fast with equal tenacity to the conviction that the history of Israel was a divinely ordered history, and the religion of Israel a divinely given revelation, leading up to the Coming of Christ, and preparing for it in a wholly different way from the negative preparation which went on silently in the heathen world.

This belief we accept as Christians on the authority of our Lord and the Apostles whom He taught. And when we pass from the consideration of the history of Israel and the revelation made to Israel to the consideration of the documents in which that history and that revelation are recorded, we cannot but accept them on the same authority as possessing a Divine element, as being, to use our ordinary word, *inspired*. But, on the other hand, they have a human element in them also. God speaks to men through men. The extent and nature of this human element, and its relation to the Divine element of which it is the vehicle, must be investigated with the fullest freedom, combined, it need hardly be said, with the most thorough reverence. The inductive method must be applied to the examination. Facts must be carefully ascertained and co-ordinated. From them we may frame a working hypothesis which must be verified by fresh comparison with facts,

and may lead us on a step farther. But nothing can be more fatal than to approach the study of Scripture with a rigid theory, and to attempt to force phenomena into agreement with that theory. "It is," as the Archbishop of Canterbury has pointed out, "of the transition from the spiritual into the natural that we are least able to form an idea . . . and it is to such a region that the thought of inspiration belongs, the thought of God passing into the limited thought of man." In defining inspiration, if indeed it is possible to define it at all, we must proceed with the greatest caution, and recognise that the definition can be only provisional.

The analogy of Creation helps us. *By faith we understand that the worlds have been framed by the word of God;* but that belief does not hinder us from examining by all the scientific methods within our power into the processes by which the worlds were made. Such an examination must in the end enlarge our knowledge of God and of His ways of working.

The plan of these Lectures is a simple one. The first two treat of the origin of the Old Testament on its human side. Their object is to show to what a large extent the books of the Old Testament have grown to their present form by the action of literary processes. The human element in them is large, larger perhaps than we are readily willing to admit; and so far as this element is concerned they cannot be exempted from literary and historical criticism,

nay they cannot be explained without it. Sober criticism is the ally, not the enemy, of theology and religion.

The third Lecture illustrates the same idea from the history of the text of the Old Testament. Once men found it possible to believe in a miraculous preservation of the text of the Old Testament from all error. Now, by the examination of facts, we know that this has not been the case. Here, too, a human element comes in. While we gratefully recognise that a superintending Providence has watched over the preservation of the Scriptures, candour compels us to acknowledge that it has not been part of the Divine plan to protect them supernaturally from all change and error in the manifold vicissitudes of a long textual history.

The fourth Lecture deals briefly with the Divine side of this Divine-human book. The fact of its inspiration is recognised, and some characteristics of inspiration, negative and positive, are considered; but here again stress is laid on the necessity of deducing our conception of inspiration from the examination of inspired books, instead of approaching them with an *a priori* theory as to what inspiration can and cannot include.

The fifth Lecture treats of the permanent value of the Old Testament for the Christian Church, which is the natural corollary to its inspiration; and of the sense in which it is still valid for the Christian Church as 'fulfilled' in Christ.

The Lectures do not attempt to deal with many of the graver questions which are being raised as to the Old Testament. I may have miscalculated, but it seemed to me that a frank and full recognition of the extent of the human element in the Old Testament, associated with an equally frank and full recognition of its Divine character, is the necessary preliminary to the solution of more difficult questions ; and that this step has still to be made by many who have grown up in traditional views of the origin of the Bible. It is for such readers that these Lectures are intended.

I venture to ask my readers, as I asked my audience, that this course of Lectures should be taken and judged as a whole; that they should not throw down the book in disgust after the perusal of the first two Lectures without going on to the fourth and fifth, which form the necessary supplement and corrective to them. The human and Divine elements in the Old Testament are inseparably joined together, though we are perforce obliged to consider them separately. We cannot see the whole of the sphere at once.

And for my own part let me disclaim any wish dogmatically to impose certain views upon my readers. All I ask is that they should *search the Scriptures, whether these things are so.* The Lectures will not have been wasted, if they may serve to stimulate any hearer or reader to a more diligent study of the Old Testament. Each age has some-

thing fresh to contribute towards the better understanding of it. Each age has some fresh lesson to learn from it. If the special work to which our age is called is that of the historical study of the Old Testament in its origin and growth, as the record of the Divine education of Israel, one special lesson which we may learn from it is the lesson of the certain and wonderful accomplishment of God's purposes for His people, and through them for the world—a lesson of infinite encouragement in times when faith and patience are often severely strained.

I must not conclude without a word of hearty thanks for much kindness shown me in connexion with the delivery of these Lectures, and an expression of my sincere admiration for the way in which the Dean and Chapter of St. Asaph, by gathering the often isolated and much-tried clergy of a scattered diocese for a short period of social reunion and theological instruction, are making the Cathedral a real centre for the diocese. To have been allowed to take part in such a gathering is no common privilege. It leaves behind many pleasant recollections, only tempered by the wish that the duty imposed on the lecturer could have been more faithfully discharged.

Lastly, my thanks are due to my friend the Rev. R. Appleton for his kind help in revising the proofs.

THE COLLEGE, ELY,
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LECTURE I

THE ORIGIN OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

πολυμερῶς καὶ πολυτρόπως πάλαι ὁ θεὸς λαλήσας τοῖς πατράσιν ἐν τοῖς προφήταις.—HEB. i. 1.

THERE have been times in which it would have been thought a sufficient answer to the question, What was the origin of the Old Testament? to reply that *men spake from God, being moved by the Holy Ghost*, and the result was the book which we call the Bible. The Bible, it would have been said, is an Inspired Book; further inquiry into the processes by which the several books which it contains came into their present form is superfluous, if not irreverent.

Such an answer, however, cannot be accepted as satisfactory in the present day. We cannot fail to recognise that this Book, the unity of which we can still affirm in virtue of its Divine origin, is, on its human side, a collection of books of the most varied character and origin. The Bible is in itself a literature; it records a history. It could not be exempted, if we wished it, from the laws and the methods of

literary and historical criticism. We should not wish to exempt it, if we could. The fact that the Bible is placed in our hands as the record of God's revelation of Himself to man, and the history of His gracious purpose for the redemption of the world, does not exclude, but rather invites, the fullest investigation of the methods of that purpose, and of the character of the record of it. We must not hesitate to subject the title-deeds of our faith to the closest and most searching scrutiny.

It is true that the critical investigation of the Bible raises not a few questions of grave difficulty. The answers to these questions may not prove to be altogether such as we should have anticipated. But the criticism and interpretation and application of the Bible must be progressive; different aspects of its character and teaching have come into prominence in different ages; and the aim of true biblical students will not be "to defend what once they have stood in," but "to find out simply and sincerely what truth they ought to persist in for ever."¹

Attention has often been called to the analogy between "the sacred volume of the Word of God and the Scriptures" and "the great volume of the works of God and His creatures." The comparison is fruitful and suggestive in many ways. Modern scientific research may sometimes seem to remove God farther from us, nay, even to banish the Creator from His creation. The uniformity of the laws of

¹ Hooker, *Eccles. Pol.* iii. 8, 8.

nature may appear to resemble the resultant of blind Force rather than the expression of sovereign Will. The methods by which creation, as we are now learning, has been moulded into its present form may prove to be far different from those which we should have expected Divine Omnipotence to employ. Scientific research has raised problems which call for a readjustment of old conceptions of the relations of God and nature. Yet there is no doubt that religion has been the gainer. Even those of us who only pick up at second hand some disconnected fragments of the marvellous discoveries of modern science, know vastly more than previous ages could know of the wisdom and power and goodness of the Creator; of His inexhaustible patience and resourcefulness and adaptation of means to a distant end. Paradox as it may seem, the laws of nature as they are revealed to us by scientific research, stand to this age in the stead of the miracles which were given to former ages.

And so it is with the Bible. As we let the light of historical research and literary criticism shine freely upon it, we learn more of the methods of God's dealings with men; of His patience and resourcefulness and silent ways of working, unseen by any human eye, so that the seed of His purposes springs up and grows, man knows not how, *first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear*. And if we find that in the record of His dealings with men He has left more to the human instruments through whom He spoke than was once supposed, is

it not rather cause for marvel at His condescension, than for distrust of the message?

The earliest collective title of the whole Bible,¹ first found in St. Jerome in the fourth century, is singularly instructive. “The Divine Library” (*Bibliotheca Divina*) at once reminds us that we have in the Bible not one book, but many. The same truth indeed is latent in the familiar word *Bible*. The word *Biblia*, which was borrowed by Latin from Greek, means “the books,” and it was not until the thirteenth century that “by a happy solecism, the neuter plural came to be regarded as a feminine singular, and ‘the books’ became by common consent ‘the Book’ (*Biblia*, sing.).”² But the idea has been wholly lost in the modern usage of the word, and it is worth while to revive the older title in order to emphasise the fact that the Bible is indeed a collection of literature of the most varied kind. History, codes of law, oratory, poetry, philosophy speculative and practical, epistolary correspondence public and private, are included in it.

In this Library there are two great divisions, distinct, but linked together by the closest ties, and rightly regarded by the Christian Church as complementary each to the other. Yet how vast are the differences which distinguish the Old Testament from the New! It is not merely that in the one we have the literature of a nation extending over a period of a thousand years, in the other the writings of a Church during

¹ See Bishop Westcott’s *Bible in the Church*, p. 5.

² *Ibid.*

little more than the first half century of its existence ; not merely that the contents of the Old Testament are more varied in their character than those of the New ; not merely that their original languages, and therefore to some extent their modes of thought and expression, are different ; not merely that they are separated by an obscure period of silence unbroken by the voice of authoritative revelation ; but that between them lies the unique and central event of the world's history, for which all that went before was the preparation, and of which all that follows after is the interpretation and application.

It is with the first of these collections only that we are concerned in the present course of lectures. Let us begin by taking a broad general survey of its contents and divisions. The Jewish name for the Old Testament is ‘Law, Prophets, and Writings.’ This triple division of the sacred books is referred to in the New Testament in the words, *All things . . . which are written in the law of Moses, and the prophets, and the psalms* (Luke xxiv. 44) ; and it is at least as old as the second century B.C. The wisdom of Jesus the son of Sirach, which we commonly call Ecclesiasticus, was translated into Greek by the author’s grandson, and in the preface to his translation, which is dated about 130 B.C., he speaks of the diligent study which his grandfather Jesus had bestowed upon *the law and the prophets and the other books of our fathers*. It would be rash to infer that the Canon of the Old Testament was finally closed

against all fresh additions in the time of Jesus the son of Sirach ; but it is important to observe that a clear distinction is already implicitly drawn between the primary Canonical Books and secondary books like Ecclesiasticus.

The titles of these divisions deserve a moment's consideration. The Law or Pentateuch is obviously much more than a code of law or a history of legislation. It derives its name from that part of its contents which came in the later history of the Jewish Church to be regarded as the chief and distinctive part of Divine revelation, the great barrier erected between Israel and heathenism. But it is well to remember that the Hebrew word *tōrāh*, translated "law," originally meant "instruction" or "direction." It was synonymous with *the word of Jehovah* (Is. ii. 3), and included all Divine revelation as the guide of life. It was only by degrees that the word came to be narrowed and petrified, so as to suggest the idea of restriction of liberty rather than direction of conduct.

The 'Prophets' are divided into the 'Former Prophets' and the 'Latter Prophets,' the first of these divisions including what we commonly call the 'Historical Books' of Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings ; the second consisting of the books which we are accustomed to regard as 'Prophetic,' Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the Twelve Minor Prophets. This wide conception of Prophecy is very noteworthy. The Prophets were the historians of Israel ; it was

the function of Prophecy not only to foretell the future and to declare the Divine will in the present, but to record and interpret the lessons of the past for the instruction of the future.

Among the ‘Writings’ or Hagiographa are included books of the most various kinds. The book of Psalms is in itself a library in miniature, a golden treasury of sacred song gathered out of many centuries of Israel’s history, giving expression to personal and national feelings of devotion in manifold forms of meditation and prayer and praise. The books of Job and Ecclesiastes are monuments of the ‘Wisdom’ or religious philosophy of Israel on the speculative side, while the book of Proverbs collects its teaching through many generations in the sphere of practical ethics.

We are considering the Bible, for the present, simply as a literature, and we naturally ask whether any light can be thrown upon the question, What was the origin of these different books? How were the histories written, the prophetic utterances preserved, the poetry and philosophy of the nation collected and arranged? The traditions of the Jewish Church go some way, but only a little way, in furnishing an answer. But they are incomplete, and perhaps not always trustworthy; and the science of biblical criticism endeavours to go further, and by interrogating the books themselves, to ascertain whether they corroborate those traditions, or, in their absence, supply materials for a probable answer. “Criticism,”

to quote the words of an admirable and sober critic, Professor A. B. Davidson, "in the hands of those who use it with reasonableness, is entirely an inductive science. Its argumentation is of the kind called probable, and its conclusions attain to nothing more than a greater or less probability, though the probability may be such as entirely to satisfy the mind." The criticism of the Old Testament (if I may venture somewhat to enlarge Professor Davidson's words so as to apply to our present subject) starts with no *a priori* principles as to the nature of Inspiration or Prophecy, or the capabilities of the prophetic gift. It examines the books and observes the facts, and its conclusions are those which such an observation leads it to consider probable.¹ Opinions will differ as to the relative weight which is to be attached to such probable conclusions from internal evidence and to the apparently definite statements of tradition, for example, in such a question as the authorship of Psalms ascribed to David, or of different parts of the book which bears the name of Isaiah; but the general consensus of sober opinion tends in the direction of attaching greater weight to the verdict of internal evidence, when it is fairly conclusive, than to traditions which sprang up in an entirely uncritical age, and which have perhaps been supposed to mean more than may have been originally intended.

It may indeed be asked whether the New Testament references do not at once decide many of these

¹ *Expositor*, vol. vi. p. 91.

questions for the reverent believer, and preclude critical investigation. If the Pentateuch is referred to as *the law of Moses*, or the latter chapters of Isaiah are quoted as *the book of the prophet Isaiah*, are we not bound to believe that the one was written by Moses, the other by Isaiah? If this position could be maintained, Christian criticism would be an anomaly and an impossibility. And there are some teachers who do not scruple to put before us the awful dilemma, "You must choose between Christ and criticism." I call it an awful dilemma, because, as it seems to me, it may amount to telling the student of the Old Testament that he must be false to his Divine Master, or false to the leading of the reason which God has given him,—and that not in mysteries which are outside the province of reason, but in matters where reason is perfectly capable of judging. The teachers who have presented us with this dilemma can scarcely have realised the strain to which it must subject the faith of some of the younger generation. But I firmly believe that we are not forced to make the choice. It is not, I believe, contrary to the catholic doctrine of our Lord's Person to suppose that in such matters His knowledge was the knowledge of His time. There can, it seems to me, be no impropriety or irreverence in such a view, when we are expressly told that He *advanced in wisdom* as well as *in stature* (Luke ii. 52); and when in regard to at least one matter He Himself expressly declared that His knowledge was limited, when He

said, *of that day or that hour knoweth no one, not even the angels in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father* (Mark xiii. 32); and this, although it was a matter of supreme importance, and intimately connected with the consummation of His own work. But apart from this deep and mysterious question of the limitation of our Lord's knowledge as man, it is difficult to see how He could (with reverence be it said) have done otherwise in literary matters than adopt the ordinary language of the time. He used, as we still use, popular and not scientifically accurate language with regard to natural phenomena such as the rising and setting of the sun. And in like manner it is difficult to see how He could have avoided using the language of tradition with regard to the nomenclature of the books of the Old Testament. If this is true as regards our Lord, it will be true for the Evangelists and Apostles also. Inspiration did not supersede the current language of the day in such matters. There was nothing misleading in such usage at the time, but it must not be misunderstood and misapplied to hinder the freedom of reverent critical research. I am glad to be able to refer to the Bishop of Manchester's admirable treatment of this subject in his recent volume, *The Teaching of Christ*. The whole sermon on the "Limitations of our Lord's Knowledge" should be read, but I may venture to quote a few sentences from it.

"The question of the age or the authorship of any passage in the Old Testament was never either started

by our Lord Himself or raised by His opponents. He did not come into the world to give instruction on such subjects. . . . When, however, we affirm our Lord's human ignorance of natural science, historical criticism, and the like, we are not to be understood as denying the possibility of the miraculous communication of such knowledge; but only the affirmation, so often confidently made, that the union of our Lord's humanity with His divinity necessarily implies the possession of such knowledge. He might be without it. We know that in one case He was without it. He never claimed to possess it; nor did His mission require that He should possess it" (pp. 42-44).

The Christian student then may and must claim the fullest liberty to examine the internal evidence respecting their origin which may be gathered from the contents of the books of the Old Testament, and to apply that evidence if need be to correct the traditional accounts of their origin.

Now the general principle to which I wish to call your attention in these lectures is that the books of the Old Testament, as we now have them, are to a far greater extent than was commonly supposed until recent times, the result of processes of compilation and combination and, in modern phrase, 'editing.' Many, perhaps most of them, were not, as may at one time have been thought, written as integral works or by a single author, and preserved precisely in the original form. Some were constructed out of earlier narratives; some were formed by the union of

previous collections of poetry or prophecies; some betray marks of the reviser's hand; and even books which bear the names of well-known authors in some cases contain matter which must be attributed to other writers.

Let us look at the problem first as it presents itself in the simplest form in the historical books or 'former prophets.' No one, I imagine, feels any difficulty in acknowledging that the books of Samuel and Kings are compilations from earlier documents. In some cases they contain more than one account of the same event,—for example, of Saul's elevation to the throne, and of David's introduction to Saul. These accounts regard the events from different points of view, and cannot always be easily harmonised; but the very fact of their discrepancy makes for the good faith of the compiler who combined them. And, to borrow the words of Dr. Salmon with reference to the contradictions, real or supposed, in the Gospels, "it is the constant experience of any one who has ever engaged in historical investigation to have to reconcile contradictions between his authorities," but such apparent contradictions do not necessarily prove that the opposing statements do not both proceed from persons having a first-hand knowledge of the events.

Similarly with regard to the book of Kings. It is obvious that the graphic flowing narratives of the ministry of Elijah and Elisha must be taken from some other source than that which furnished the dry

annals and bare statistics of the life and death of kings and the duration of their reigns.

But we can go farther than merely pointing out that the books of Samuel and Kings were compilations. We can indicate with tolerable certainty some, at least, of the main sources from which they were compiled. The Chronicler (1 Chron. xxix. 29) actually names as the original authority for the history of David's reign, *the history of Samuel the seer, and the history of Nathan the prophet, and the history of Gad the seer*. The author of the book of Kings names *the book of the acts of Solomon* (1 Kings xi. 41) as his authority for the history of Solomon's reign, and frequently refers for fuller information to *the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah*, and *the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel*. But the Chronicler's reference to the original authorities for the history of Solomon's reign (2 Chron. ix. 29), makes it a tolerably certain inference that *the book of the acts of Solomon* was a history of his reign written by the contemporary prophets Nathan, Ahijah, and Iddo. Again, *the histories of Shemariah the prophet and of Iddo the seer* are appealed to as the authority for the history of Rehoboam's reign (2 Chron. xii. 15); and *the commentary of the prophet Iddo* for the reign of Abijah (2 Chron. xiii. 22). But perhaps the most important notices are some which tell us that *the history of Jehu the son of Hanani*, recording the events of the reign of Jehoshaphat, was *inserted in the book of the kings of Israel* (2 Chron. xx. 34, R.V.),

and that *the vision of Isaiah the prophet*, which narrated *the acts and good deeds of Hezekiah*, was to be found in *the book of the Kings of Judah and Israel* (2 Chron. xxxii. 32). For here apparently we have a direct statement that prophetic narratives were incorporated in the comprehensive history of the kingdoms known to the Chronicler as *the book of the Kings of Judah and Israel*, or briefly, *the book of the Kings of Israel*; and there is at least a reasonable probability that these and similar narratives formed a part of the materials used by the compiler of our books of Kings, whether they were already embodied in some larger historical work, or still existed in an independent form.

Now what follows from this? Nothing less than that the primary authorities for large parts of the history in the books of Samuel and Kings were the narratives of contemporary prophets. Samuel may have been the historian of his own lifetime, which included the greater part of Saul's reign. Nathan and Gad together may have recorded the history of David's reign. The full and vivid account of David's friendship with Jonathan may possibly be preserved almost in the very words in which David told his story to his friends the prophets; and the singularly graphic and detailed narrative of David's flight from Jerusalem reads like the description by an eye-witness of the events of a memorable day, of which every incident was indelibly stamped upon his memory.

But in order to appreciate the full force of these

considerations, we must bear in mind the character and methods of Oriental historiography. Oriental historians did not write history as modern historians usually do, by studying and digesting their authorities, and then producing an entirely new work in their own language; but, like the mediæval chroniclers, they incorporated the authorities which they made use of, with but little change. They might put such portions as they extracted from the different sources available into a new framework or setting; sometimes they might modify one authority by comparison with others; sometimes they might add new matter of their own; but the language of the original accounts would frequently be retained with comparatively slight alterations.

There are no cogent reasons for referring the compilation of the book of Samuel to a late date. The book of Kings may have been completed substantially before the exile, though the last chapter carries the history down to the release of Jehoiachin in 561 B.C. (2 Kings xxv. 27). But whatever may have been the dates at which these books were brought into their present form, there is good reason to believe that their compilers had access to first-hand sources of information, and that in consequence of the method of historical writing in vogue, these books actually contain, with but little change, substantial portions of original and contemporary narratives.

I have detained you too long over a straight-

forward matter, but it seemed worth while to commence our investigation with a simple form of the problem, and to point out that this compilatory method of composition brings us into a closer contact with the events and the actors than any other method of historical writing could have done.

From the historical books or ‘former prophets’ I pass on to the prophetical books in our ordinary sense of the word. The idea of the composite origin of these books is far less familiar to the ordinary reader of the Bible. Many, if they have thought at all about the question, probably suppose that the prophets themselves wrote down their own discourses before or immediately after their oral delivery, and themselves collected their writings into the books which bear their names. This may have been the case with some books, such, for example, as Joel and Ezekiel, but it can hardly have been the case with other books, such as Hosea and Isaiah. In these books it is scarcely possible to suppose that the discourses were written down and arranged by the prophets in the form in which they have come down to us, and it is a positive hindrance to their interpretation to suppose it. It is only when we realise that we may be passing, without any external indication of the transition, from a discourse delivered to one audience under one set of circumstances, to a discourse delivered to a different audience under an entirely different set of circumstances ; when further we recognise that some of the discourses are only

condensed summaries of teaching which extended over considerable periods, and others in all probability notes, and sometimes fragmentary notes, of their master's teaching preserved by the prophet's disciples; when once more we admit at least the possibility that some of the prophetic books contain the writings of other prophets than those whose names they bear, and of an entirely different period,—it is only, I say, when we recognise possibilities such as these, which a careful critical study raises to the level of practical certainties, that we are in a position to approach the study of these difficult and obscure books with any hope of success.

I wish to illustrate these remarks from the books of Jeremiah and saiah. In the one case we have certain definite statements, from which important inferences may be drawn, and which are remarkably corroborated by internal evidence; in the other we have to argue from internal evidence only, but internal evidence of a singularly convincing kind.

The book of Jeremiah contains an extremely instructive account of the way in which a part—but a part only—of that book was committed to writing. We read in the 36th chapter that *in the fourth year of Jechoiakim* Jeremiah received this command from God : *Take thee a roll of a book, and write therein all the words that I have spoken unto thee against Israel, and against Judah, and against all the nations, from the day I spake unto thee, from the days of Josiah, even unto this day.* Twenty-one or twenty-two years had

passed since Jeremiah's call in the thirteenth year of the reign of Josiah. During all this time he had been prophesying, but as yet, it would seem, he had committed nothing to writing. Now, however, in obedience to the Divine command, he called his disciple Baruch the scribe; and Baruch wrote down at Jeremiah's dictation *all the words of the Lord, which He had spoken unto him.* The task occupied a considerable time, and it was not until at least a year afterwards, in the ninth month of the fifth year of Jehoiakim, that Baruch, acting for Jeremiah, read *the words of the Lord, in the ears of the people, in the Lord's house upon the fast day.* We know the sequel: how the king sent for the roll, and when it was read before him, contemptuously shredded it to pieces and burnt it on the fire in the brasier before him. But the matter did not end there. Jeremiah, by Divine command, took another roll, and Baruch re-wrote at his dictation *all the words of the book which Jehoiakim had burned in the fire;* and the account concludes with the significant statement that *there were added besides unto them many like words.*

This narrative throws important light upon a prophet's mode of working. There was a long period of oral teaching, during which he committed nothing to writing; and obviously it can only have been a condensed summary of that teaching which was embodied in the roll. Doubtless it represented faithfully the sum and substance of the message which he had been commissioned to deliver; but it

can scarcely have repeated the *ipsissima verba* of discourses spread over a period of more than twenty years. It is interesting to observe the instrumentality of the faithful disciple Baruch, acting as the prophet's amanuensis, as Tertius did for St. Paul (Rom. xvi. 22). And further, it is to be noted that the first form of this collection of prophecies was not its final form. Much was added when it was re-written.

The roll cannot, of course, have been co-extensive with the existing book of Jeremiah, which contains many prophecies belonging to a later date than the fifth year of Jehoiakim, nor can we be sure that the whole of the roll is preserved to us. The prophecies have certainly not been kept in their original order, for the prophecies against the nations, some at least of which were included in the roll, are collected at the end of the book according to the arrangement of the Hebrew text. But much, if not all, of the roll is doubtless embodied in the present book ; and there is a remarkable difference between the language of the earlier parts of the book, which were presumably taken from it, and the later parts. In the earlier parts of the book Jeremiah speaks in the first person. The formula, *the word of the Lord came unto me*, or some equivalent, is frequently used. Do we not in this formula hear the very voice of the prophet dictating to his amanuensis ? The first person appears still in some few of the later prophecies in chaps. xxiv., xxvii., and xxviii.; but in the later chapters

the third person takes its place, and the regular formula is, *the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah*. Again, from chap. xx. onwards Jeremiah is very frequently styled *Jeremiah the prophet*, but this designation does not occur in the earlier chapters. Such a designation would scarcely have been used by the prophet himself, but would have come quite naturally from the pen of Baruch ; and this is a corroboration, slight in itself but clear, of the inference which may be derived from the use of the first and third persons noticed above—that in the later parts of the book Baruch (if we may assume that it was he) was acting more independently as the collector and editor of his master's prophecies and the records of his life than in the earlier parts, which he had in the main written down from Jeremiah's dictation. Thus the positive information which we have with reference to the origin of the book of Jeremiah is remarkably confirmed by internal evidence, and we are able by the help of the internal evidence to supplement that partial information by an exceedingly probable conjecture.

The question still remains whether we can draw any inferences from an examination of the earlier prophecies, which were presumably taken from the roll, as to the plan and method adopted by the prophet in recording the teaching of those twenty-one years. It is difficult to trace a distinct plan of arrangement; but the framework appears to be in the main chronological. But within, and to some

extent traversing the chronological arrangement, there is an arrangement according to subject-matter. The prophet appears to have taken important discourses or incidents at successive periods of his ministry for his starting-point; and to have attached to these other incidents or discourses of similar character which might confirm or illustrate them, although belonging to a different time.

The book of Jeremiah is thus seen to be composite in its origin, and to consist partly of discourses which were written down from the prophet's own dictation as a summary record of his previous teaching, partly of narratives and discourses which probably owe their preservation and their present form to the faithful care of his disciple Baruch.

As a further indication of the gradual way in which the Old Testament grew into its final form, it may here be noticed that the book of Jeremiah evidently passed into circulation in two recensions, differing considerably from each other. One of these is represented by the Septuagint Version, the other by the Hebrew text. The Septuagint differs from the Hebrew both in order and in matter. In the Septuagint the prophecies against the nations (chaps. xlvi.—li. of the Hebrew and A.V.) stand after chap. xxv. 13, and they are arranged in a different order. Moreover, a considerable number of passages, longer and shorter, which are found in the Hebrew text, are not found in the Septuagint. There can be little doubt that the book existed in what we

may call a longer and a shorter recension, the former of which is represented by the Hebrew text, and the latter by the Septuagint. In this variation we see a trace of the process of ‘editing’ which the books of the Old Testament have undergone. The copy from which the original used by the Septuagint translators was derived had not received its final revision. Baruch or others after him subsequently revised the text, inserting some paragraphs, the connexion of which was doubtful, in more than one place, and adding others, which were, or were commonly reputed to be, the work of Jeremiah.

The history of the origin of some of the other prophetical books is probably not very dissimilar to that of the book of Jeremiah. It is possible that some of the prophets only wrote down some part of their prophecies, or even committed nothing to writing themselves. Partial collections of a prophet’s works may have been in circulation in his lifetime, and after his death these would be united, and supplemented by such recollections of their master’s teaching as his disciples could supply. While the living voice was still among them, less need would be felt for a record of the prophet’s teaching; but when the voice was silent, loving care would strive to preserve some permanent memorial of his work.

The endeavour of criticism to discover the way in which the prophetic books came into their present form is not due to mere idle curiosity, nor is it a fruitless expenditure of labour. All that can be

ascertained with more or less probability as to their literary origin has an important bearing upon their interpretation. While for our instruction and profit we may be content to read the books in the form in which they have come down to us, critical study requires that at least an attempt should be made to place a prophet's teaching in connexion with the events of his time ; to arrange, if it may be, his prophecies in approximate chronological order ; and to mark, where it can be done, the progress and development of his teaching in the successive periods of his ministry. Much must to the end remain uncertain, but real advance has been made, and is being made, towards the fuller understanding of the intimate relation of the prophets to the times in which they lived and worked.

LECTURE II

THE ORIGIN OF THE OLD TESTAMENT—*continued*

εἰσὶν αὐτῶν οἱ κατέλιπον ὄνομα τοῦ ἐκδιηγήσασθαι ἐπαίνους, καὶ εἰσὶν ᾧ οὐκ ἔστιν μυημόσυνον.—ECCLESIASTICUS xliv. 8, 9.

WHAT has been said thus far leads on to a graver question, which has sometimes been viewed with unreasonable dislike and suspicion. May there not be included in the same book the writings of prophets other than the one whose name it bears? May not the title represent (so to speak) a school rather than an individual? May not disciples have not only preserved but continued and completed the work of their master? The combination of the writings of different prophets in the same volume may have been accidental or intentional. It may have happened accidentally through the combination of writings to form a roll of a certain size, or it may have been brought about intentionally, with the object of supplementing or completing an existing work. This may have been done without the slightest idea of fraud or bad faith, or wish to give currency to a prophecy by the authority of a great name. The

Divine message was regarded as something far greater than the human messenger through whom it was communicated : it threw his personality entirely into the background. We know absolutely nothing of some of the prophets. Joel, the son of Pethuel, is a mere name to us. Of others, such as Amos, we know nothing but what we learn from their own writings. History does not mention them, even though, like Micah, they may have played an important part in the religious movements of their time.

The combination of the works of more than one writer in the same volume cannot, in view of what we have already learned as to the origin of some books of the Old Testament, be regarded as impossible or even improbable. But the evidence for it must in the nature of things be wholly internal evidence. It cannot, as we have seen, rise above probability, though that probability may amount to practical certainty. And it has to be balanced against the tradition, which, whatever may be its meaning or value, has united the writings in question together under one name.

The most important and most familiar case in which modern critics have agreed to see the work of a plurality of authors in one book is the book of Isaiah. Not only the last twenty-seven chapters, but considerable portions of the first thirty-nine chapters, are thought to show clear indications of an age later than that of Isaiah, the contemporary of Hezekiah, and of a writer or writers clearly distinguishable from that prophet. With regard to the portions

of the first thirty-nine chapters which are thought to be the work of some prophet other than Isaiah, I do not wish to say anything now. But I propose to lay before you, so far as it can be done in a brief compass, some account of the grounds upon which the last twenty-seven chapters are attributed to a prophet—or, possibly, prophets, though for our present purpose we need not enter upon that question—who lived in Babylonia towards the close of the Babylonian exile; for those grounds appear to me to be entirely convincing, and to offer one of the best examples of the methods and results of biblical criticism.

Let it be remembered that the problem is to be approached “with no *a priori* principles as to the nature of prophecy or the capabilities of the prophetic gift.” We will not say that prediction is impossible, or necessarily limited to vague generalities. Let us then for the time forget that this writing—or, rather, whether it is the work of one writer or of several, this group of writings—is attached to the book of Isaiah. Let us simply interrogate the document itself, and collect the evidence which it offers concerning its author, and the time and place and circumstances of its writing. Direct statement there is none. Very rarely does the author let his own personality appear at all. But of indirect evidence, indicating the circumstances under which he wrote, there is no lack.

Jerusalem is in ruins ; the temple, in which past generations worshipped, is a heap of ashes ; the cities

of Judah are deserted; the land is desolate. *Thy holy cities are become a wilderness, Zion is become a wilderness, Jerusalem a desolation. Our holy and our beautiful house, where our fathers praised Thee, is burned with fire; and all our pleasant things are laid waste* (Is. lxiv. 10, 11).

Israel is in exile, suffering the punishment of its sins. Jehovah has surrendered His people to their enemies. They are being tried in the furnace of affliction. Jerusalem has drunk to the dregs the cup of Jehovah's fury. She lies prostrate in the dust. The chains of captivity are on the neck of the daughter of Zion. The mother-city Zion is *bereaved of her children, a barren exile, wandering to and fro.* Her children are scattered from their home. Jehovah's wife is divorced from Him for her children's transgressions, and they are sold into slavery for their iniquities.

Babylon is the scene of Israel's captivity. Babylon is the tyrant who holds Zion's children in thrall. Babylon has been Jehovah's instrument for executing His judgments, and she has performed her task with cruel delight.

The exile has already lasted long. It seems to have become permanent. Jehovah sleeps. Zion fancies herself forgotten and forsaken. The weary decades of captivity are lengthening out into an eternity of punishment.

But when faith and hope are strained to the point of breaking, deliverance is at hand. Jerusalem's

time of servitude is accomplished; satisfaction has been made for her iniquity.

The decree has gone forth for freedom, redemption, restoration. The deliverer is on his way. Cyrus has been raised up from the East. He is already in full career of conquest. Babylon is doomed. Her gods are to be humbled. Jehovah is about to lead forth His people in a second exodus which will eclipse the glories of the first, and to conduct them through the wilderness to their ancient home. Jerusalem will be rebuilt and the temple restored.

Now what I want you to observe is this—and pray do not take the statement on my authority, but verify it for yourselves—that the prophecy does not profess to *predict* the destruction of Jerusalem, the Babylonian exile, and the mission of Cyrus. These things are described or assumed as *existing facts*. Jerusalem is destroyed, Israel is in exile, Cyrus is already triumphantly advancing from point to point. What *is* foretold is the speedy deliverance of the exiles from their captivity. All these data point unmistakably to the last ten years of the Babylonian exile as the time at which the prophecy was delivered.

Moreover, there are indications, less definite perhaps, but tolerably convincing, which point to Babylonia as the place in which the prophet was living. He speaks in the presence of a dominant heathenism. Idolatry in all its grossness and stupid folly surrounds him. He has watched the infatuated idolaters manufacturing their gods, and carrying them

in solemn procession, and setting them up in their temples. With unrivalled eloquence, inspired by mingled feelings of pity and indignation, he contrasts the power and wisdom of Jehovah, the living God, the God of Israel, with the impotence and ignorance of these lifeless idols. The whole drift of his description makes it plain that it is idolatry in its own heathen home of which he is speaking, not the idolatry of apostate Israelites in Judah. Moreover the prophet is in closest touch and sympathy with the exiles. He is fully acquainted with their circumstances, their character, their sins, their hopes, their fears, their faithlessness, their despondency; and when we note how he unites himself with them in confession, in thanksgiving, in earnest pleading, we can scarcely doubt that he was himself one of them.

It follows that if this prophecy was composed in the last ten years of the exile, by a prophet who was himself an exile, living among the exiles in Babylonia, its author was not Isaiah the son of Amoz, the contemporary of Hezekiah, whose life must have ended more than a century before. This conclusion is corroborated by the evidence of style and language and theological ideas. These arguments time would not allow me to adduce now, and this is the less to be regretted because, although they form a very strong confirmation of the conclusion drawn from positive indications, they are not *in themselves* so convincing, and cannot well be stated in a summary

form without some discussion of possible answers and qualifications.¹

We have then to weigh the conclusion derived from a study of the book itself against the tradition of the Jewish Church, which ascribes this prophecy to Isaiah. That tradition is undoubtedly very ancient. The author of the book of Ecclesiasticus regarded these prophecies as having been written by Isaiah, who *saw by an excellent spirit what should come to pass at the last, and comforted them that mourned in Sion* (xlviii. 24); and his authorship was not seriously questioned until modern times. But we know nothing, except what we can gather from the books themselves, of the circumstances under which the writings of the prophets were collected; and if once the right of criticism to confirm or dispute the statements of tradition on the ground of internal evidence is admitted, I do not see how we can resist the conclusion that these chapters were not written by Isaiah, but by an unknown prophet toward the close of the Babylonian exile. This conclusion rests, let me repeat, upon no "*a priori* arguments as to the impossibility of prophecy," but upon a simple induction from the contents of the book.

No doubt the problem is not quite so simple as the broad general arguments here given in outline seem to represent. For instance, there is a section of

¹ An excellent statement of them will be found in Dr. Driver's *Isaiah, his Life and Times*, pp. 185 ff.

the prophecy which appears to go back into pre-exilic times, and speaks as though the Israel of the kingdom were still existing. But I believe that the prophet is borrowing the language of his predecessors in order to describe the old sins for which Israel was suffering in exile ; and he does so in order to emphasise the truth of the continuity of national life, and to show the people how the guilt of old sins, which they had never disowned and repented of, still clung about them.

There are, moreover, many resemblances of thought and style between this book and the acknowledged prophecies of Isaiah, and it may be hard to see how the name of such an eminent prophet could have been lost, or how his work came to be incorporated along with the prophecies of Isaiah. But the resemblances are on the whole less than the differences ; they can be accounted for by the author's familiarity with Isaiah's writings ; he was a true disciple and successor of Isaiah. In such a disciple Isaiah himself lived on ; where could a more fitting place for his works be found than in the same volume with those of his great master ? Here too, as in other cases, the individuality of the prophet who was charged with a Divine commission seemed to be of comparatively little moment. The messenger was lost sight of in the message ; nay, the more divinely wonderful the message, the less it mattered to posterity to know from whose lips or pen it came.

But you will say, what do we gain by separating

these prophecies from the time-honoured name of Isaiah, and relegating them to the time of the exile? We should indeed be glad, as a German commentator observes, to vindicate this most wonderful of Old Testament prophecies for the greatest of the Old Testament prophets, and to regard it as the crown of Isaiah's work. And it will inevitably seem to many students of the Bible that in assigning the prophecy to a date so near to the events which it foretells we are detracting from its truly predictive character, and diminishing its value. But Isaiah is great enough to share his glory with this disciple in whom being dead he yet spoke; and, paradox as it may seem, the truly *prophetic* character of the work gains by being referred to the time of the exile. For while it is *conceivable* that Isaiah might have been transferred in spirit to a future age, and taking his stand in the midst of tribulations which he foresaw were to come have predicted the deliverance which was to follow them, such a hypothesis is not in accordance with the general economy of revelation. The more carefully we study the Old Testament, the more constantly are we impressed with what may be called *the circumstantial origin of prophecy*; with the fact that the teaching of one prophet after another arose directly out of the circumstances of his own time, and was providentially designed to meet the needs of that time. Adaptation is a law of Divine action in revelation as well as in nature. Here, on the other hand, if the prophecy were Isaiah's, we

should have an example of a prophecy entirely disconnected from the events of the author's time, the practical value of which would not have been felt for at least a century after his death. And prediction, though one of a prophet's credentials, was not the whole, or even the most important part, of his work. That such a prophet as the author of this work was raised up at this unique crisis in Israel's history, is surely even a greater proof of God's superintending care and providence than the abstract prediction of events a century and a half beforehand could have been of His omniscience. If ever an age needed the living voice of a prophet, it was this age of the closing years of the exile ; and it was in this crisis, a crisis not only in the history of Israel, but of the history of the world's redemption, that (as criticism tells us) God raised up a prophet second to none of the older prophets save Isaiah himself, to comfort the desponding spirits of the exiles, and to bring home to them the conviction of the grandeur of Israel's mission for the world, and the certainty that Jehovah, who had chosen Israel to be His servant to accomplish this mission, would assuredly fulfil His purpose. If any prophecy bears the stamp of Divine appropriateness it is this, and it is only when it is brought into the closest connexion with the circumstances of the closing years of the exile that it gains life and reality, and that its full significance can be appreciated.

When we turn to the third great division of the Old Testament, the ‘Writings’ or Hagiographa, we find similar indications in some of the books that they have had a long literary history before they reached their present form. Let us take first, as the simplest and most readily intelligible example, the book of Proverbs. In it external landmarks coincide most remarkably with differences of internal characteristics. The book bears the title : *The proverbs of Solomon, the son of David, king of Israel*; and we may believe that it does so with justice, because Solomon was the originator of the proverbial philosophy which is collected in it. But directly we examine it, we see that it bears upon the face of it the clear marks of being a composite work, all the parts of which cannot be due to the same author or the same period. The first nine chapters contain a series of hortatory discourses; and these are followed by the primary collection of ‘Solomonic’ proverbs, properly so called (x. 1—xxii. 16), which bears the special title (x. 1) : *The proverbs of Solomon*. To this is appended a collection of *words of the wise* (xxii. 17—xxiv. 22), with a further short supplement (xxiv. 23-34). Then comes a second collection of ‘Solomonic’ proverbs (xxv.—xxix.), bearing the title, *These also are proverbs of Solomon which the men of Hezekiah king of Judah copied out*. The book concludes with certain sayings of Agur (xxx.), and of Lemuel (xxxii. 1-9), and an acrostic poem (xxxii. 10-31).

Now the three principal sections of the book are distinguished by marked internal characteristics. The introductory discourses (i.—ix.) are not, strictly speaking, proverbs at all, but a series of short didactic poems or exhortations, the general purport of which is to recommend wisdom in view of the various dangers to which the young men of the time were exposed. The proverbs contained in the first collection (x.—xxii. 16) are all distichs, consisting of two lines only, and they are mainly of the form called *antithetic*; that is to say, the truth stated in the first line is confirmed or illustrated by the contrast of its opposite in the second. In the second collection (xxv.—xxix.) there are many proverbs of more than two lines, and they are chiefly of the *parabolic* or *emblematic* form. Indeed, proverbs of this kind are so common that the collection has been compared to a picture scrap-book with explanatory titles written underneath the pictures.

Here obviously are interesting problems for the critic to solve. Is this remarkable difference of form and character in the proverbs of the two collections due to the taste of the collectors or to the object for which the collections were made? or is it due to a difference in the age of the proverbs, the simpler form being the older, the expanded and developed form the later? Was the introduction a separate work, or was it composed as a preface to one of the collections, or to the whole book, after the collections had been united? May we suppose that any con-

siderable part of the proverbs in these collections proceeded from Solomon himself, or are there internal characteristics inconsistent with such a view? These are questions which I can only throw out, and cannot stop to answer. I will only say now, that as there are remarkable differences between the form of the proverbs in the first collection and that of the proverbs in the second collection, there are also remarkable differences in the condition of affairs and the historical situation which they reflect. The proverbs of the first collection belong to a time when men knew the kingdom from its best side; those of the second collection contain references to the miserable condition of the people, due to the oppressive behaviour of the nobles and the evil effects of misgovernment, which clearly reflect the disastrous experiences of a reign like that of Ahaz. On these and other grounds we are led to the conclusion that much of the book must belong to a later age than Solomon's, and must reflect the history not of one age, but of many, and the thought not of a single individual, but of many generations.

From the book of Proverbs we turn to the Psalter; and here too we find plain proof that the book has had a long literary history. As the Proverbs of Solomon derived their title from the sage who we may believe founded the school of proverbial wisdom in Israel, so the Psalter derived its popular name from the poet who, in spite of recent criticism, I must still believe was the founder

of the sacred poetry of Israel and of the Catholic Church. It is true that the Psalms are not in the Old Testament called as a whole the Psalms of David, yet already in New Testament times the whole collection appears to have been called by his name, and he was popularly regarded as the author of it.¹ This is instructive, for not only is no claim made in the Psalter itself for the Davidic authorship of all the Psalms, but it is obvious from their contents that many of them could not have been written by him.

The book of Psalms is a subject which might well have a whole course of lectures to itself; and all I wish to do now is to indicate one or two points in which it illustrates the general idea which I am trying to put before you, that the books of the Old Testament have grown to their present form by processes of editing and compilation and collection going on through long periods. First, then, with reference to the origin of particular Psalms, I should like you to note how Psalms were revised and adapted and combined by later poets or editors. We have positive evidence of this. The Eighteenth Psalm is found in the second book of Samuel as well as in the Psalter; and there are numerous variations between the two copies. Some of them are manifestly due to the mistakes of scribes in copying; but others are plainly due to deliberate revision of the text. The Fourteenth Psalm, again, recurs as the Fifty-third, and here again there are some remark-

¹ Cf. Heb. iv. 7.

able variations; and it seems to me to be the most probable explanation, that the conclusion of the Psalm was altered by some poet or editor who wished to adapt it to the circumstances of his own time, by introducing an allusion to a special event, not improbably the destruction of Sennacherib. We know how in the present day the compilers of hymnals have in some cases altered and added to the hymns even of living poets. Once again, the One hundredth and eighth Psalm is simply a combination of portions of the Fifty-seventh and Sixtieth Psalms. Now when we find these instances actually before our eyes, we are justified in assuming, if critical considerations require it, that other Psalms owe their present form to revision and adaptation and combination, and we need not be shocked if commentators take such a view, and regard the Nineteenth Psalm, for example, or the Twenty-seventh, as combinations of poems by different authors.

With reference to the origin of the Psalter as a whole, I need only point to what is probably familiar to you all, that there are three main divisions in the Psalter. First, there is the 'Davidic' collection, Ps. i.—xli., all the Psalms in which except three bear the name of David. Secondly, there is the 'Elohistic' collection, so called because *Elohim*, i.e. *God*, is used in it in the place and almost to the exclusion of the name Jehovah. This collection extends from Ps. xli. to Ps. lxxxiii., and Ps. lxxxiv.—lxxxix. form an appendix to it and may be classed

along with it, although they are not marked by the peculiar use of *Elohim*. This collection has itself been formed by the union of smaller collections of Psalms bearing the names of the Sons of Korah, of Asaph, and of David, and its Elohistic character is due, I believe, to the hand of an editor. In the third division, Ps. xc.—cl., most of the Psalms are anonymous, but a few bear the name of David.

It is an interesting problem, and one which is worth while examining for a moment here, for the sake of the side-light which it may throw upon the composite authorship of prophetic books, how far the titles which ascribe Psalms to David can be regarded as trustworthy. Most critics agree that many of the Psalms which bear his name cannot have been written by him. Many Psalms ascribed to him assume situations and circumstances wholly unlike any in which he can be supposed to have been placed; some, e.g. lxix. and ciii., refer to the destruction of Jerusalem; the language of others, e.g. cxxxix., is unquestionably late; others, e.g. lxxxvi., are mere compilations. While, then, a certain relative weight may be assigned to the title *A Psalm of David*, its probability must in each case be tested by the internal evidence of the contents of the Psalm.

But how did these titles come to be prefixed to the Psalms? All the Psalms in the first book (with the exception of the first two, which are prefatory, and Ps. xxxiii.) bear the name of David; and it is not unlikely that they were taken from a collec-

tion which bore some such name as *The Psalms of David*, or perhaps, *The Prayers of David* (Ps. lxxii. 20); not that all the poems in the collection were written by David, but because he was the original founder of it, and the most famous contributor to it. We commonly speak of Newman's *Lyra Apostolica*, though five other writers beside Newman contributed to it. Then when the Psalms of this collection were taken over into the Psalter, the name of David was placed at the head of each Psalm taken from it. With regard to the Psalms in the later books which bear the name of David, it is possible that some of them may be authentic productions of his, which had not found a place in the earlier collection. But it is also possible that imitations of Davidic Psalms may have been called by his name without the slightest intention of fraud; or again, that Psalms may have been written by other poets to illustrate particular episodes in his life, or to express the thoughts which might be supposed to have been in his mind on certain occasions; and these again may easily have had his name affixed to them, without any idea of passing them off as his for the sake of giving them currency and authority. Delitzsch observes¹ that it was characteristic of the spirit and custom of ancient historians and poets, and especially those of the Bible, to live themselves into the modes of thought and expression of great men, and by imitating their thoughts and feelings,

¹ *Genesis*, p. 30.

make themselves their organs. Much doubt rests, and must necessarily rest, upon the authorship of most of the Psalms, and even the age to which a particular Psalm is to be attributed may be quite uncertain; but I cannot but think that it is an extreme and passing phase of criticism which would deny the existence of Davidic Psalms entirely, and relegate all the Psalms, with perhaps one or two exceptions, to the post-exilic or even the Maccabaean age.¹

We come now to the Pentateuch, or to use the language of modern criticism, which on literary grounds connects the book of Joshua with the five preceding books, the Hexateuch. I have reserved this to the last, because it seemed to me that we might most advantageously approach the question of its origin by a consideration of the somewhat simpler and less controverted questions of the origin of the Historical, Prophetical, and Poetical Books. For, somehow or other, the critical analysis of the Hexateuch has been viewed in this country with more suspicion and disfavour than critical inquiries into the origin and composition of the other books of the Old Testament. If, however, you have followed me thus far, you will be prepared to regard it as at least not antecedently improbable that the Hexateuch, like so many of the other books, is composite in its origin, and has a long literary history. Modern criticism claims, and claims with justice, to have proved that it is so.

¹ See Note B.

First let us clear the ground by interrogating the books themselves, and inquiring what they have to say about their own authorship. The Pentateuch nowhere claims to have been written by Moses. That it was entirely written by Moses, with the exception of the account of his death and burial in the concluding verses of Deuteronomy, which was added by Joshua (though according to some authorities even these verses were written by Moses himself), is simply a Jewish tradition which passed into the Christian Church and was commonly accepted until modern times. The tradition of the Mosaic authorship was already well established in New Testament times ; but as we have already remarked, the adoption in the New Testament of popular and current nomenclature cannot foreclose investigation in literary any more than in scientific questions.

What, then, has the Pentateuch itself to say about its author? Time forbids me to go into the question in detail, but the facts are briefly these. Genesis contains no statement whatever about its author. In the three middle books of the Pentateuch Moses is said to have been directed to commit to writing accounts of certain events, and to have recorded certain laws and other matters ; but these statements refer to comparatively small portions of the whole work. They include the curse upon Amalek (Ex. xvii. 14) ; the book of the covenant (Ex. xx.—xxiii. ; see Ex. xxiv. 4-7) ; the short code of laws which is given in connexion with the restoration of the broken Tables

of the Law (Ex. xxxiv. 10-26; see Ex. xxxiv. 27, 28); and the list of the stations in the journey of the Israelites through the wilderness (Num. xxxiii. 2). Besides these references to documents written by Moses, there is an interesting mention in Num. xxi. 14 f. of the *book of the wars of Jehovah*, from which the very ancient fragments of poetry quoted in that chapter were probably taken.

In Deuteronomy, on the other hand, there are statements which at first sight may seem to attribute the writing of the whole Pentateuch to Moses. A closer examination, however, shows that they cannot refer even to the whole of Deuteronomy. It is said that he *wrote the words of this law in a book* (xxxi. 24; cf. vv. 9, 26), but exactly similar language is used when it is evident that the reference cannot be to the whole law, or even to the whole of Deuteronomy. It is plain, for example, that the command to write *all the words of this law* upon the stones which were to be set up on Mount Ebal (xxvii. 3) can only refer to a nucleus of the law, perhaps no more than the Ten Commandments. It is also said that Moses wrote his song (xxxi. 19, 22).

So far as the Pentateuch itself is concerned, we may safely come to the conclusion that it makes no claim to have been written by Moses, and that we are free to examine what indirect evidence as to its origin can be derived from the books themselves. And it may be taken as the accepted result of such an examination, that the Pentateuch is a composite

work, which has grown into its present form by the combination of a plurality of documents.

The principal grounds upon which the composite origin of the Pentateuch is maintained are briefly the following : (1) Different parts of it are distinguished by the use of the different Divine names, *Elohim* and *Jehovah*. (2) It contains duplicate accounts of the same events, sometimes placed side by side, as the two accounts of creation ; and sometimes fused into one narrative, as the two accounts of the Flood. (3) The portions thus marked by the use of the Divine names, or standing as duplicate narratives of the same events, are found to be further distinguished by peculiarities of language and conception. (4) Inconsistencies and contradictions are to be observed, which can scarcely be reconciled with any theory of unity of authorship.

A vast amount of labour and ingenuity has been spent upon the critical analysis of the Hexateuch, with the result that there is a very general consensus that four principal documents have been combined to form the Hexateuch as it now stands. (1) There is the document which forms the basis of the whole, and is therefore often spoken of as the “foundation document” (*Grundschrift*). It is also often called the *Priests’ Code*, because the ceremonial legislation in Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers formed the chief part of it. It began with the account of creation in Gen. i.—ii. 3, and contained an outline of the patriarchal history. To it belongs in the main the de-

scription of the distribution of the land in Joshua xiii.—xxi. In this document the name *Elohim* (God) is used in the primitive period before Abraham. In the patriarchal age the name *El Shaddai* (God Almighty) appears. From Ex. vi. onward *Jehovah* is employed. (2) and (3) Two parallel narratives of the patriarchal and early history of Israel, one marked by the use of the name *Jehovah*, the other by the use of the name *Elohim*. These were combined at an early date by a compiler who took such extracts from each as suited his purpose, and the result may be termed the ‘prophetic narrative.’ It contained legislative matter, both civil and religious, e.g. Ex. xx.—xxiii., as well as history; but it is of a simple and elementary kind. (4) Deuteronomy.

The difference of style between these different elements is well marked. “The priestly narrative,” says Professor Driver, “is characterised by a systematic arrangement of material; great attention is paid in it to chronological, genealogical, and other statistical data; it is minute and circumstantial, even in its aim to attain precision not avoiding repetitions; it abounds in stereotyped phrases and formulae. The prophetic narrative is free and flowing, it details scenes and conversations with great force and vividness; the style is much more varied, and its representations of the Deity are far more anthropomorphic than those of the priestly document.” . . . “The characteristic feature in Deuteronomy is its parenetic treatment of the laws, and the stress which it lays

upon the moral and spiritual motives which should prompt the Israelite to the observance of them.”¹

These documents themselves had a literary history before they were welded together in our present Hexateuch. They were composed out of existing elements, partly oral and partly documentary.

Critics are fairly unanimous in distinguishing these different sources, but they are not so unanimous as to their chronological order and actual dates. For a long time it was supposed that the ‘primary document’ or ‘priestly code’ to which belongs the ceremonial legislation was the oldest document, and Deuteronomy the latest; but the theory which is now most in favour regards the ‘prophetic narrative,’ with its simple legislation, as the oldest, Deuteronomy as an intermediate stage, and the ‘priestly code’ as a later codification of the developed ceremonial law. It would carry us far beyond our present limits of time, and indeed beyond the strict limits of our subject, to discuss the relation of these documents to one another and to the other books of the Old Testament. What I have wished to make clear to you is simply this, that the compilation of the Hexateuch from pre-existing sources must be accepted as one of the certain results of critical inquiry. For the rest, I must content myself with quoting the words of Delitzsch.² “Such a distinction of sources naturally involves temporal succession . . . but though in more exactly determining

¹ *Contemporary Review*, Feb. 1890.

² *Genesis*, p. 18.

the dates of the various elements we may have to come down to times far later than the Mosaic age, this does not exclude the possibility that the narrative rests on tradition, and the codified law springs from Mosaic roots." Similarly with reference to Deuteronomy he says : " We assume for these testamentary discourses a traditional substratum, which the free reproduction follows. . . . The author of Deuteronomy has completely appropriated the thoughts and language of Moses, and from a genuine oneness of mind with him reproduces them in the highest intensity of Divine inspiration."

There is one point connected with the origin of the Pentateuch so remarkable that I cannot refrain from briefly noticing it. The decipherment of the cuneiform tablets brought from Assyria has revealed the startling fact that the ancient Babylonians possessed accounts of the Creation and the Flood, and according to the most recent discoveries, of the Fall also—but on this point I am told by one who has a good right to speak that we must still reserve judgment—so closely resembling those of Genesis, that it is impossible to suppose that they are independent one of another. When and how did these narratives come from Babylonia to Palestine? Some critics have attempted to maintain that the Hebrews only became acquainted with the Babylonian legends during the exile. Such a theory is in itself so intrinsically improbable that it would require to be supported by the very strongest proof. Is it likely

that the Israelites in exile would have adopted the traditions of their oppressors, and even placed them in the forefront of the Law? Did the nation whose earliest prophets insisted with such eloquence upon the creative omnipotence of Jehovah, possess no account of creation until the exile? But apart from this, it is pointed out by Schrader, one of the foremost students of these inscriptions, that it is the Jehovistic document which most resembles the Babylonian legends, and this document is acknowledged on all hands to be much earlier than the exile. By far the most probable way of accounting for the resemblance is to suppose that the Hebrews brought these primitive legends with them when they migrated from Ur of the Chaldees. Of the significant difference between the Babylonian narratives and those of Genesis I shall have occasion to speak in my fourth lecture. Now I will only add that if this view is the true one, there are elements in the Hexateuch of vast antiquity, coming down from the twilight ages of the childhood of the world before the call of Abraham. The documents which can be traced in the Hexateuch already had a literary history and embodied the traditions of many generations before they reached the form in which they were found by the redactor who united them into the present structure.

I have dealt in these first two lectures with the outward form of some of the books of the Old Testa-

ment. I have endeavoured to give some idea of the literary processes by which they were brought into their present shape. I am aware that such dealing with Holy Scripture seems to some devout lovers of the Bible unprofitable if not irreverent, unspiritual if not profane. Unquestionably our highest concern is not with the outward form, but with the life which animates that form; not with the letter, but with the spirit which is breathed into all these manifold documents, giving them a common unity, and stamping them all as parts of one Divine plan and purpose. Yet it is the duty not less than the right of the Christian student to investigate by every means in his power the origin of those books which he holds to be the title-deeds of his faith. He must not be deterred by the fact that such researches have often been carried on in a spirit the very reverse of reverent, and with the aim rather of discrediting the Bible than of discovering the truth regarding its origin with a view to its better interpretation. He must work with an open mind and a good courage, neither hastily accepting what is new nor obstinately clinging to what is old; not anxiously inquiring how much of old traditional views may be retained and how little conceded in the direction of change, but patiently and impartially endeavouring to ascertain, so far as it is possible to ascertain, the exact facts of the case. If the critical study of the Bible is pursued in this spirit, "every result which can be surely established will teach us something of the manner

of God's working, and of the manner in which He provides for our knowledge of it."¹ But criticism, it must always be remembered, is not an end in itself, but a means,—a means towards the better understanding for ourselves and our times of the one Divine message communicated to man *in many parts and in many fashions.*

¹ Bishop Westcott, *Hebrews*, p. 493.

LECTURE III

THE PRESERVATION OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

καθὼς παρέδοσαν ἡμῖν.—ST. LUKE i. 2.

FROM the consideration of the origin of the Old Testament we pass to the history of its preservation. What is known of the way in which the text of the Old Testament has been handed down through all the centuries which have elapsed since even the latest book in it was written ? Through what vicissitudes has it passed in that long history ? Can we believe that the existing Hebrew text faithfully represents the original archetypes, or must we admit that it has suffered corruption and alteration in the process of transmission ? If the admission must be made, what is the extent of the corruption, and what means, if any, have we for restoring the true text ?

The subject is no doubt a somewhat technical one, and it is in many respects extremely obscure ; but it seems to me that the broad general outline which is all that can be given here may not be without interest, and certainly is of importance in its bearing on the results arrived at in the preceding lectures. We

have seen that many of the books of the Old Testament are the result of literary processes, in some cases of long and complicated literary processes. It pleased God to communicate His revelation of Himself to man through men, and it did not please Him to exempt the records of that revelation from the literary and historical methods of the age and the country. Those records were placed in men's hands to transmit to posterity, and we shall now see that it did not please Him to exempt them from the vicissitudes to which other monuments of ancient literature have been subject in the course of their transmission from age to age. In the preservation as well as in the origin of the Scriptures there has been a large human element, larger than was at one time supposed ; and while we reverently acknowledge the Divine origin of those Scriptures, and gratefully recognise the providential care which has watched over their preservation, we must not exaggerate inspiration into verbal infallibility, or providential guardianship into absolute protection from error. It is necessary to emphasise this point, because extraordinary misconceptions have been, and in some quarters still are, prevalent with regard to the Hebrew text of the Old Testament. It is still not uncommonly supposed that from the earliest times it was copied with the scrupulous accuracy which characterised the scribes of a later age ; but as we shall presently see, this cannot have been the case. In the Old Testament as well as in the New textual

criticism is the indispensable preliminary and hand-maid to the work of interpretation. The student must endeavour to ascertain what is the original text of the passage which he has to explain; to eliminate, if possible, errors which have crept in through the carelessness or ignorance of scribes; to confess, it may be, that the extant evidence no longer enables him to determine the original text with certainty.

The student of the text of the Old Testament has to work under entirely different conditions from those which present themselves to the student of the text of the New Testament. The MSS. of the Hebrew text of the Old Testament differ most widely in relative age and actual character from the MSS. of the Greek text of the New Testament. There are numerous Greek MSS. of the New Testament in existence. Most of them are comparatively modern; but several are earlier than the ninth century; one almost complete MS., the Codex Alexandrinus, the great treasure of the British Museum, dates from the fifth century; and two, the Codex Vaticanus in the Vatican Library at Rome and the Codex Sinaiticus in the Imperial Library at St. Petersburg, were written in the fourth century. These MSS. by no means all agree; and it is a laborious and difficult task to compare their various readings, and determine how we may most nearly arrive at the original words used by Evangelists and Apostles. The evidence of these MSS. is checked and corroborated by the existence of versions made

in the second and third centuries, as well as by numerous quotations in the works of the early Fathers ; and it is the deliberate judgment of the greatest textual critics that “the books of the New Testament, as preserved in extant documents, assuredly speak to us in every important respect in language identical with that in which they spoke to those for whom they were originally written.”¹

Of the Old Testament there are also numerous Hebrew MSS. in existence. But the majority of them are later than the twelfth century, and the oldest of which the date is known was written in 916 A.D. That is to say, while we possess Greek MSS. of the New Testament written little more than two centuries and a half after the date of the earliest of the books which they contain, our oldest Hebrew MS. of the Old Testament is separated by more than a thousand years from the latest of the books included in the Canon.

But this is not all. Unlike the Greek MSS. of the New Testament, the Hebrew MSS. of the Old Testament all agree in giving substantially the same text, which is commonly called for reasons which will be explained presently (pp. 69 ff.) the Massoretic Text. They contain no various readings of real importance. The variations between them are, to speak quite roughly, less than the variations between the different editions of the Authorised Version from 1611 onwards.

This uniformity might be due to one of two causes :

¹ Westcott-Hort, *The New Testament in Greek*, ii. 254.

either to the accurate transmission of the text from the very first, or to the adoption, at some time or other, of a standard text, which was universally accepted, to the exclusion of all variations, and has been preserved without alteration since. In this case the text may of course contain errors more or less numerous which already existed in the MS. or MSS. from which it was taken. I will anticipate somewhat by saying at once that the evidence is conclusive in favour of the second hypothesis. The history of the text goes to show that an official or received text was settled by the Jewish scribes soon after the destruction of Jerusalem. When once this standard had been determined and accepted at the great centres of Jewish learning, MSS. differing from it would be condemned and fall out of use, or be deliberately destroyed. In this way the disappearance of all MSS. presenting a different form of text may be easily accounted for.

The entire disappearance of ancient MSS. may also partly be due to the Jewish practice of destroying, from motives of reverence, old and worn-out copies of the Scriptures. Attached to each synagogue was a chamber called the *Geniza*, in which torn and mutilated copies of the Scriptures were deposited in order that they might not be profaned by being applied to common uses. From time to time the *Geniza* was cleared out and its contents buried. At one time it was customary to bury a worn-out copy of the Law by the side of a scholar.

We need hardly take into account causes so remote as the destruction of the Scriptures in the persecution of Antiochus Epiphanes, when the mere possession of a copy of the Law was a capital offence (1 Macc. i. 54-58). But similar wholesale destructions of the Scriptures have probably taken place since. In the Diocletian persecution the Christian Scriptures were made the object of special attack ; and multitudes of copies of the Old Testament have perished by violence in the numerous persecutions and frequent exiles of the Jews.

The existing Hebrew MSS. of the Old Testament are of two classes. (1) MSS. for synagogue use, written on parchment or leather, in the form of rolls. They contain (in separate rolls) the Law, the *Haphtārōth* or Lessons from the Prophets, and the five *Megillōth* or Rolls (Song of Songs, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther), which are appointed for use on certain days. These MSS. always contain the ‘unpointed’ or consonantal text (p. 57) only. They are written with extreme care. The traditional rule given in the Talmud was that a copy of the Law with two errors on a page might be corrected, but if it had three, it must be put in the *Geniza*. The scholar Ben Chayim asks, Is not the scroll of the Law in which one letter is omitted illegal ? (2) MSS. for private use, written in book-form on parchment, leather, or paper. They contain the ‘pointed’ or vocalised text (p. 57), with more or less of the Massoretic critical apparatus (p. 72), and sometimes Rabbinic

commentaries in addition. Such a MS. would generally be prepared by several scribes. One would write the consonantal text, another would add the vowels and accents, another the Massora, another the commentaries, another would correct it, and so forth. They are somewhat less accurate than the synagogue rolls, but nevertheless were often prepared with extreme care.

Here I must make a brief digression in order to explain the terms ‘pointed’ and ‘unpointed’ text. Hebrew, like other Semitic languages, was originally written with consonants only. A few long vowels were indicated by certain consonants, but in the most ancient times, as we know from inscriptions, even these were very sparingly employed. The reader had therefore to supply the vowels necessary for pronunciation, and this might obviously be done in different ways. For example, the same consonants KTB might be read to mean, *he wrote, writing, written, write thou, to write, a writing*. Of course in most cases the context would decide at once how a word was to be pronounced, but sometimes considerable ambiguity might exist, which could only be obviated by a traditional system of reading orally handed down and carefully committed to memory.

The inconveniences of such a system of writing are obvious; and it is not to be wondered at that the Jews at length invented vowel marks or ‘points’ which could be added to the consonants to indicate the exact pronunciation. A MS. or printed Bible

containing these marks is said to be *pointed*, and one not containing them is said to be *unpointed*.

I will now proceed to give a brief sketch of the history of the text of the Old Testament. Many points in that history are involved in great obscurity, and it is only possible to give approximate dates. Still certain periods can be marked out, each of which is distinguished by some important fact; and the sketch, rough as it must necessarily be, may enable you to understand something of the vicissitudes through which the text has passed. For our present purpose the history of the text may conveniently be divided into four periods.

(I.) The pre-canonical period before the time of Ezra.

This period belongs almost as much to the history of the origin of the Old Testament as to the history of its transmission. We have seen indications that the scribes allowed themselves considerable freedom in dealing with the books which they copied, while the Scriptures were still in the process of growth. In this period books were written on skins or linen, or possibly on paper, which was used in Egypt at a very early date. They seem to have been generally in the form of rolls.¹

But the most important fact to remember with reference to this period is that the character employed was the old Hebrew character, which was in

¹ Ps. xl. 7; Jer. xxxvi. 14 ff.; Ezek. ii. 9; Zech. v. 1; Ezra vi. 2. The "leaves" in Jer. xxxvi. 23 mean *columns*.

general use in Phoenicia, Palestine, and Moab. Our oldest monument in that character is the famous Moabite stone, which records the exploits of King Mesha, about 890 B.C. This stone was discovered in 1869 at *Dhibān*, the ancient Dibon. Unfortunately it was broken up by the Arabs, but the greater part of it was secured, and is now in the Museum of the Louvre at Paris. The same character is found in the inscription recording the construction of the tunnel connecting the Virgin's Spring with the Pool of Siloam, which is certainly not later than the time of Hezekiah, and may possibly be earlier. It is found on seals and gems assigned to dates from the eighth century B.C. onwards. It is used on coins of the Maccabaean period (141—135 B.C.), and even as late as the rebellion of Bar-cochab (132—135 A.D.) It is still retained in a somewhat modified form by the Samaritans. In this period of course writing was consonantal only, and the use of consonants to represent long vowels (p. 57) infrequent and irregular.

It is scarcely probable that the text escaped corruption and alteration during this period. The form of the archaic characters was irregular, and they were peculiarly liable to confusion ; and while as yet the canonical books were not separated off from other books, it is scarcely probable that they would be copied with precise accuracy. Many of the variations between parallel texts probably arose in this period.

(II.) The second period reaches from the time of Ezra to the Fall of Jerusalem (450 B.C.—70 A.D.)

The first great work of this period was the determination of the Canon of the Old Testament. This was a gradual process. We have seen (p. 5) that the prologue to Ecclesiasticus speaks of "the Law, the Prophets, and the rest of the books," as already forming a definite and well-known class of writings in a way which corresponds to the idea of a Canon, and distinguishes them from secondary books such as Ecclesiasticus. No doubt the Canon of the Old Testament was fixed substantially as we receive it before our Lord's time ; though the canonicity of the Song of Songs and Ecclesiastes was challenged upon internal grounds, and the doubts respecting these books were not authoritatively settled until the Synods of Jamnia, 90 and 118 A.D.

The second important fact of this period was the adoption of the 'square' character now in use in place of the archaic character. Jewish tradition, followed by Origen and Jerome, attributes the change to Ezra. But there is always a tendency to connect important changes with great names, and it is more probable that no formal transcription of the Scriptures from one character into the other took place, but that just as the Aramaic language gradually superseded Hebrew after the captivity, so the square character, which appears to have been of Aramaic origin, gradually superseded the older character. The tradition may be based on the fact that the square character

was introduced by Ezra, but the evidence of coins and inscriptions proves that the two forms of writing co-existed side by side for a considerable time. But by our Lord's time the character in ordinary use was the square character. This is plain from the reference to *yod* as the smallest letter in Matt. v. 18, "One *jot* . . . shall in no wise pass away from the law," for *yod* is the smallest character in the square, but by no means the smallest in the archaic alphabet. As, however, the older character was still employed on coins, it cannot have been wholly unintelligible.

With this change from one character to another we may compare the substitution of cursive for uncial writing in Greek MSS., and the superseding of black letter by Roman type in our own language. But the change in Hebrew was more abrupt, and we can scarcely be wrong in supposing that not a few errors crept into the text during the process.

What was the state of the text during this period? Is there any evidence to show that there was a fixed and uniform "received text," or on the contrary that various forms of text were current in the Jewish Church, and that no stress was as yet laid upon a precise verbal uniformity of copies? There is evidence, and it points clearly to the latter conclusion.

(1) The Samaritans have preserved the Pentateuch independently of the orthodox Jews, in a character not differing materially from the archaic Hebrew character. This Samaritan Pentateuch contains readings which do not agree with the existing Hebrew

text. Some of them are, beyond question, alterations introduced to give support to the Samaritan schism, e.g. the substitution of *Gerizim* for *Ebal* in Deut. xxvii. 4; but a number remain of which the most natural explanation is that they existed in the copy originally received by the Samaritans.

(2) More important, however, is the evidence of the Greek version, known as the Septuagint (LXX.), made in Egypt in the third and second centuries B.C. for the use of the numerous body of Greek-speaking Jews and proselytes in that country. That version differs very considerably from the present Hebrew text. Thus, for example, in Samuel there are considerable omissions; in Kings and in Proverbs there are considerable additions; the prophecies of Jeremiah are arranged in a different order. Some of the variations of the LXX. from the Hebrew text are due, no doubt, to errors and interpolations and deliberate alterations; but after all allowance has been made for these, I do not see how any candid critic can resist the conclusion that many of them represent variations existing in the Hebrew text from which the translation was made. Whether the readings which the LXX. offers are superior to those of the Massoretic Text is another question, which will have to be considered presently. What we have to observe here is that the LXX. gives positive evidence that different recensions of the Hebrew text existed in this period.

The Massoretic Text may be regarded as repre-

senting the text current in Palestine, while the LXX. represents that in use in Egypt. But the Egyptian Jews were desirous of maintaining their connexion with their brethren in Palestine, and we can hardly suppose that they would have differed from them on such a crucial point as the text of the Scriptures, if the same importance had been attached to a rigid uniformity of text as was done by the scribes of a later age.

(III.) The third period in the history of the text extends from the Fall of Jerusalem to the end of the fifth century, when the great storehouse of Jewish learning, known as the Talmud, was completed and committed to writing. It was probably at the very beginning of this period, towards the close of the first century A.D., that the final settlement of an authoritative text took place. When Judaism was reconstructed after the destruction of Jerusalem, a spirit of stern dogmatism was dominant. The literalism of scholars like Rabbi Aqiba, who spent twenty-two years with his teacher in studying the meaning of the common particles, prevailed. The Scriptures were appealed to for dogmatic purposes, and it became necessary to fix authoritatively the *ipsissima verba* of the standards of religion.

It is possible that this was done in the schools of Jamnia, to which the most learned rabbis fled after the Fall of Jerusalem. But be that as it may, it is clear that the text was definitely settled early in this period. Three Greek versions were made in the

second century; one by Aquila, who is said to have been a pupil of Rabbi Aqiba, in the time of Hadrian, 117—138 A.D.; another by Theodotion; and a third by Symmachus, a little later. Of these versions considerable fragments are preserved, which for the most part agree closely with the present Hebrew text. We have further evidence from Origen in the third century (185—255 A.D.) and Jerome in the fourth (331—420 A.D.), as well as from the Targums, or translations into the vernacular Aramaic, which were completed in these centuries, showing that varieties of text were disappearing, and a form of text agreeing almost exactly with the Massoretic Text coming into universal currency. The Talmud regards the text as absolutely fixed.

The evidence, then, is fairly conclusive that a standard text not differing materially from our present text came into general use in this period. But how was this uniformity attained, and how came it that all the copies containing other readings have disappeared? A bold conjecture has been advanced that all our Hebrew MSS. are derived from a single copy which survived at the destruction of Bethor, when the rebellion of Bar-cochab was suppressed by Hadrian (135 A.D.) Hence their uniformity. But there is no need to have recourse to such a violent hypothesis. When once the religious authorities of the nation had determined what was to be the standard text, that and that only would be perpetuated by the scribes. Copies differing from it

would die out or be deliberately destroyed. The practice of destroying worn-out or inaccurate MSS. (pp. 55, 56) accounts for the disappearance of all such copies, and it will be remembered that we have no MS. or even fragment of a MS. of this period of any kind whatsoever surviving.

There are two remarkable parallels to the uniformity of the text of the Old Testament in the Koran and the Vedas. In the case of the Koran uniformity was secured by the Caliph Othman, who destroyed all the copies which diverged from the standard text which he had adopted. In the case of the Vedas, a diligent school of grammarians in the fifth century B.C. occupied themselves in settling a standard text which has been preserved without variation ever since.

Traces of the minute labours of the scribes of this period are found (1) in what are known as the 'removals of the scribes,' five passages in which the word *and* was struck out; and (2) in the 'corrections of the scribes,' eighteen passages in which, mainly for dogmatic reasons, certain readings were adopted in preference to others. Thus in Hab. i. 12, *we shall not die* was pronounced to be right in preference to *thou diest not*, from motives of reverence. But (3) still more important are the variations known as *K'thībh* and *Q'rī*, to which reference is made in the preface to the Revised Version. These words mean respectively *written* and *read*, and we find from time to time in the margin of the Hebrew Bible notes to

the effect that certain words are *written but not read* (*e.g.* in *Jer.* li. 3); or that certain words are to be *read though not written* (*e.g.* *2 Sam.* xvi. 23); or that certain words are to be *read otherwise than they are written* (*e.g.* *Ps.* c. 3).

Many of these variations have only a grammatical interest, as for instance those which substitute ordinary forms for archaisms. Others are euphemisms, the commonest being the substitution of *Adōnai* (Lord), or *Elōhīm* (God), for the ineffable Name YHVH (Jehovah), which is accordingly for the most part represented in the A.V. by LORD or GOD, the small capitals indicating that the sacred Name actually stands in the text. Others, however, are relics of real various readings, and originated in a divergence between the MSS. used by the scribes. But it must not be supposed that it was left to the reader's discretion to choose between conflicting readings. The decision was absolutely and authoritatively made that such a word or form of a word was to be read; but—and in this we see a proof of the scrupulous care with which the scribes of this period abstained from tampering with the text—the word to be read was not inserted in the text itself, but only noted in the margin.

Sometimes the *Q'rī* and sometimes the *K'thībh* appears, upon internal grounds, to be preferable; and the A.V. and R.V. follow sometimes one and sometimes the other. But it must be clearly understood that the *Q'rī* or marginal reading is the received

reading, and when they adopt the *K'thībh* in preference to the *Q'rī*, as for example in Ps. xxiv. 4, they are deserting the orthodox Jewish tradition.

Many of these variations are recognised in the Talmud; and as they were probably transmitted orally and not committed to writing in the period which we are considering, it is only a part of them that have come down to the present day.

Simultaneously with the determination of the consonantal text grew up *an exegetical tradition*, or fixed method of reading and dividing the text. But as yet this method was transmitted orally only; no written vowel marks were added to the text. The Talmud knows of no written vowel points, although it regards the pronunciation and meaning of words as definitely fixed.

Jerome knew of no written vowels, and pronunciation was in his day still to some extent a matter of choice and locality. Thus he writes: "It does not matter whether it be called *Salem* or *Salim*, for the Hebrews very seldom use vowel letters in the middle of a word, and the same words are pronounced with different sounds and accents according to the choice of the reader and the locality."¹ The "vowel letters" to which he refers are not the vowel points, but those consonants which, as has already been explained, are sometimes used to mark long vowels. In his commentary on Jer. ix. 22 he illustrates the possible varieties of pronunciation and meaning of a

¹ *Ep. 73 ad Evangelium.*

word thus : “ The Hebrew word which is written with three letters *Daleth*, *Beth*, *Res* (for there are no vowels between them), according to the context and the reader’s pleasure, signifies, if it be read *dabar*, word ; if *deber*, death ; if *dabber*, speak.” But though he had no written vowels, it is plain that he was acquainted with an “exegetical tradition,” and that this very closely resembled that which the Jews have perpetuated to the present day.

We go a step further back to Origen. One column of his great *Hexapla* was devoted to a transliteration of the Hebrew into Greek characters. His pronunciation is analogous to the present pronunciation, but still not so close to it as Jerome’s.

But if we go back still further to the period before the Christian era, we find evidence that this system of pronunciation had not yet been developed. From the way in which the Septuagint translators transliterate proper names, it may be inferred with certainty that the pronunciation of Hebrew to which they were accustomed differed in many respects from that of later times. It was rougher, less artificial, less systematic. Unquestionably it belonged to an earlier stage of the language. To give one example out of many, Hebrew, as now read, never doubles the consonant *r*. But this was not anciently the case, as the Septuagint pronunciation of the name *Gomorra* indicates.

But further, the Septuagint translators read many words—which in the absence of written vowels or a

fixed exegetical tradition might be read and explained in more ways than one—quite differently from the tradition of later times; though, on the other hand, in some obscure and ambiguous cases their interpretation agrees exactly with the later tradition.

These facts then point to the following conclusions: (1) that before the Christian era, while the written text was still current in various forms, the exegetical tradition was still in a rudimentary stage. Something was fixed, in certain obscure and ambiguous cases, but much was still fluctuating, and was left to the intelligence of the reader. (2) That in the period from 70 A.D. to 500 A.D., simultaneously with the authoritative determination of the consonantal text, a fixed tradition sprang up, regulating the orthodox method of reading it even in minute peculiarities. This method of reading, so far as pronunciation is concerned, was largely influenced by the solemn chant-like mode of reciting the Scriptures which was in use in the Synagogue.

(IV.) The fourth or Massoretic period in the history of the text may be taken to extend from the sixth to the eleventh centuries. It witnessed two events of the greatest importance: (1) the reduction of the exegetical tradition to writing by the invention and adoption of a full apparatus of vowel points and accents; (2) the elaboration of the ingenious machinery for preserving the integrity of the text known as the *Massōra*. This period was essentially conservative, not productive. Its highest

aim was the faithful preservation and transmission of the traditions it had received. Its distinguishing characteristic was a painful and anxious literalism.

(i.) Babylon and Tiberias were the great centres of Jewish learning in this period, and between these schools certain readings remained in dispute. They are known as “Eastern” and “Western” readings; they concern letters and not vowel points; but they rarely affect the sense of a word, and for the most part relate to questions of orthography only. I think this is worth mentioning because it shows to what petty minutiae—the most trivial of trifles—the Rabbinic textual criticism had come down. The authority of the Western readings prevailed in Europe, and they are generally adopted in our printed Bibles.

Babylon and Tiberias each adopted a distinct system of pronunciation marks. In all essential points the two systems agree. The Babylonian, however, is less elaborate. It was completed first, probably in the seventh century, but it fell entirely into disuse. It does not appear in any printed Bibles, and is known only from MSS., of which the most famous is the St. Petersburg Codex of the Prophets, dated 916 A.D.

The Palestinian system of reading marks is that which is found in our printed Hebrew Bibles. It includes three classes of marks. (1) Those determining the pronunciation of consonants: *e.g.* whether a consonant is to be doubled, and whether certain

consonants are to be unaspirated. (2) Vowel marks, ten in number, and a mark denoting the absence of a vowel. (3) Accents, twenty-seven in number, serving not only to mark the accented syllable of a word, but to show the logical connexion of words in a sentence, and the proper cadence for reading or chanting it. They form, in fact, a most elaborate system of punctuation in the modern sense of the word, and a rhythmical notation indicating the proper inflexion or intonation of the whole sentence.

This notation of vowel points and accents was probably fully developed by the middle of the eighth century; but it is important to bear in mind that it did not originate a new method of reading and interpreting the text. It merely stereotyped what had long been current as oral tradition, and that tradition carries us back to the first centuries of the Christian era.

Absolute uniformity could not of course be secured even now. The exact method of reading many words still remained in dispute. Two MSS., written by famous scholars of the two schools, are often referred to by subsequent writers. The great authority of the Western Jews was the Codex of Rabbi Aaron ben Asher, written by him in the early part of the tenth century; and Rabbi Moses ben Naphtali wrote a codex to criticise his readings from the Eastern point of view. Both MSS. are lost, but a list of 864 readings more or less, in which they differed, is preserved. The points at issue between them

concern vowels and accents almost exclusively, and rarely affect the sense. To all intents and purposes the text of the Old Testament had been fixed in the preceding period.

(ii.) The text having now been fully committed to writing, it remained to secure it from corruption. With this object an elaborate system of checks and safeguards, known as the *Massōra*, was devised. It was a saying of R. Aqiba, that "Tradition (*Massōra*) is a fence to the Law." The *Massōra* of which he spoke was the tradition of customary rules, which by enlarging the sphere of duty protected the actual precepts of the Law from the danger of violation. But the textual *Massōra* was also designed as a fence to the letter of the Law. It would require a separate lecture to give any adequate idea of what is embraced by the term *Massōra*. It includes (1) a reckoning of the number of verses, words, and even letters in the books of the Old Testament. The middle verse, word, and even letter of a book are noted. (2) Peculiar forms of words and peculiar phrases are noted, with the number of times which they occur. (3) All the notes of *Q'rī* and *K'thībh*, the corrections of the scribes, etc., were carefully collected and preserved. (4) Rules are given as to certain words which are to be marked with special points, letters to be written large, small, suspended, or inverted, spaces to be left between words, etc.

Much of this material belongs to an earlier age, but the systematic elaboration of the *Massōra* must

belong to this period, for many of the notes refer to vowel points and accents.

The scribes who compiled this mass of critical material were called "masters of tradition" or *Massoretes*, i.e. *traditionalists*. Their chief centre of activity was Tiberias, and hence Buxtorf called his commentary on the Massōra—a work of vast learning which has never been superseded—*Tiberias*. From the labours of these men the Received Text of the Old Testament is commonly called the *Massoretic Text*.

That text has been preserved unchanged for a thousand years with the most minute accuracy. Indeed, we may go much farther and say that so far as the consonants are concerned it has remained substantially the same for nearly eighteen hundred years.

We have traced the history of the Massoretic Text, but we have still to inquire into its character. Water cannot rise above its own level; and the most careful preservation could only perpetuate error, if error had crept in previously to the time at which the standard text was adopted. We have already seen by the way (p. 62) that the Septuagint Version supplies evidence that variations of the text existed in the earlier period. Can it be supposed that the Massoretic Text has preserved the true and unadulterated text, and that these variations are all errors and corruptions? Is the Massoretic Text to be placed on a pedestal by itself, beyond the

reach of the audacious touch of criticism, or must we call in the aid of the Versions to correct it, or even in the last resort, have recourse to conjectural emendation in desperate passages?

The question of the integrity of the Massoretic Text was hotly debated in the seventeenth century. On the one side were ranged those famous Hebrew scholars the Buxtorfs of Basle, and their followers. They defended the absolute integrity of the Hebrew text, and agreed with the authorities of the Synagogue in maintaining its exclusive validity. They held that the final and authoritative revision of the text was made by Ezra and the men of the "Great Synagogue," to whom was also due the collection of the books of the Old Testament and the determination of the Canon. Ezra and his companions, they taught, had purged the text from all extraneous additions and accidental errors, and had finally settled the authorised method of reading it by the addition of the vowel points. The whole work, they believed, was carried out under the guidance of Divine inspiration.

The theory is temptingly complete, but it is shattered to pieces by the inexorable logic of facts. There is no trace of the existence of the vowel points before the seventh or eighth century A.D., and there is clear evidence of their non-existence in the previous period.

The opposition to the Buxtorfs was led by Louis Cappel, a Protestant, Professor at Saumur, and Jean

Morin, a Paris Oratorian. They maintained that the Massoretic Text was far from being absolutely perfect, that the vowel points were of late origin, and that in a large number of passages the Hebrew text must be corrected by the help of the Versions, especially the Septuagint. They may have gone too far in depreciating the value of the Massoretic Text, but their view is in the main supported both by external history and by internal evidence; and it is now generally admitted that instead of the Massoretic Text being the work of Ezra and his contemporaries, it is the production of far later times, and instead of being absolutely perfect, it has only a relative superiority, and needs frequent correction. It may be taken as certain that, as we have already seen, there was a period in the history of the text of the Old Testament when it was not preserved with the same scrupulous care and accuracy which were such remarkable characteristics of the later Jews. Like the text of the New Testament, it suffered from intentional alterations, and to a still greater extent from accidental corruptions, in the process of transcription. Like the New Testament, the Old Testament was at one time circulated in forms differing considerably from one another. The Alexandrian Jew of the two or three centuries before the Christian era read his Old Testament in a form differing from that in which the Jew of Palestine was familiar with it; just as the Western churches in Italy and Africa during the first two or three centuries of the Christian

era read the New Testament in a text differing considerably from that which was current at Alexandria.

The history of the text which has been traced in the preceding pages raises a presumption that the text will not be found to be free from error; and that presumption is converted into a certainty by the examination of the Massoretic Text itself, and by the comparison of it with the ancient Versions. The proofs of the imperfection of the Massoretic Text lie partly in the consideration of the text itself, partly in the comparison of parallel passages, partly in the evidence which is supplied by the Ancient Versions.

(1) There are many passages in which the Massoretic Text, as it stands, cannot be translated without doing violence to the laws of grammar, or cannot be reconciled with the context, or with other passages. In some of these the Versions offer no help, but in others the LXX. or some other Version supplies the necessary correction. Thus, for example, to take a simple instance, the Massoretic Text in Gen. iv. 8 reads, *And Cain said to Abel his brother.* The word *said* cannot be rendered as in the A.V., *talked with.* The usage of the language requires that the words spoken should be expressed. Something is undoubtedly lost in the Hebrew text, and the LXX. and some other Versions fill up the gap suitably enough with the words, *Let us go into the field.*

When we read that *the Lord smote of the people seventy men, and fifty thousand men* in the village of

Beth-shemesh (1 Sam. vi. 19), we may be tolerably sure that there is some error in the numerals. The village of Beth-shemesh cannot have contained such a number of inhabitants, and the anomalous order of the numerals and the absence of the conjunction *and* mark corruption, to say nothing of the tolerably evident signs of much deeper-seated error in the verse. But here the LXX. does not help us. Similarly in 1 Sam. xiii. 5, *thirty thousand chariots* can hardly be right. The number of chariots was always less than that of cavalry, and such an enormous force of chariots is not only quite unparalleled, but would have been useless in the mountainous country of Judah. The common text of the LXX. has the same reading, but Lucian's recension and the Syriac Version read *three thousand*, which may be right.

In Ps. xvi. 2, the ellipse of *O my soul* which is assumed by the reading of the Massoretic Text, *thou hast said unto the Lord*, cannot be grammatically justified. The LXX. and other Versions are no doubt right in reading *I have said*, which is adopted by the R.V.

What sense can be made of the Massoretic Text in Jer. xi. 15? The A.V. certainly contrives with some ingenuity to translate it thus: *What hath my beloved to do in my house, seeing she hath wrought lewdness with many, and the holy flesh is passed from thee?* but the result is unintelligible. The LXX. at any rate gives a good and clear sense: *Why hath the beloved wrought abomination in my*

house? Shall vows and holy flesh take away from thee thy wickednesses, or shalt thou escape by these?

But I need not multiply examples. I pass on (2) to the evidence of parallel passages. A careful comparison of the variations between Ps. xviii. and 2 Sam. xxii. makes it tolerably certain that some at least of the variations are due to errors of transcription, while others are probably due to intentional changes. The text of the Psalm appears to have been subjected to a careful literary revision.

In 2 Sam. xxi. 19 we read that *Elhanan the son of Jaare-oregim the Bethlehemite slew Goliath the Gittite*, whereas the parallel passage in 1 Chron. xx. 5 says that *Elhanan the son of Jair slew Lahmi the brother of Goliath the Gittite*. The A.V. smooths over the difficulty by the insertion of the words *the brother of* before *Goliath* in Samuel. This is only a conjectural emendation, and it is evident that one, or more probably, for reasons upon which I need not enter here, both of the texts are corrupt.

(3) The ancient Versions represent various readings, which in many cases bear a strong stamp of probability upon them, and often lessen or remove the difficulties of the Massoretic Text. Let us glance at a few examples.

In 1 Sam. xiv. 18 the Hebrew text reads : *And Saul said unto Ahijah, Bring hither the ark of God. For the ark of God was there at that time with the children of Israel.* But the LXX. reads : *Bring hither the ephod. For he wore the ephod at that time before*

Israel. Which is the more probable of these rival readings? Saul wished to "inquire of God" before going to battle. No doubt it was an ancient practice to carry the ark out to battle as the symbol of God's presence, and the ark might have been there, though we have had no mention of its transportation from Kiriathjearim. But it was not the Ark, but the Ephod with Urim and Thummim, which was the regular instrument for ascertaining the will of God. Moreover, *bring hither* is a term applied to the Ephod (1 Sam. xxiii. 9; xxx. 7), but not to the Ark. Hence it is almost certain that the LXX. has preserved the true reading.

Take as another and an important instance Ps. xxii. 16. The Massoretic Text reads: *like a lion my hands and my feet*, and a verb *did they mangle* must be supplied to complete the sense. But most of the ancient Versions represent the word now read *like a lion* by a verb, though they translate it in different ways, and there can be no reasonable doubt that a verb originally stood in the text, and that our translators were right in adopting the rendering *they pierced*, which is substantially that of the LXX.

Space forbids the multiplication of instances in which the LXX. or other Versions help the interpretation of the Old Testament by presenting or suggesting readings which carry conviction with them. But enough has been said to show that it is idle to talk of "the incredible folly of tinkering the Massoretic Text," when that text cannot be for a

moment regarded as so perfect as to be exempt from criticism.

The Revisers were unquestionably right in adopting some readings from the Versions, and in placing others in the margin, as at least worthy of consideration. It may be doubted, indeed, whether they did not err on the side of caution, and whether they should not have taken most of these marginal readings into the text, and placed a number of others in the margin.

For example, in Gen. xlvi. 21, the words, *As for the people, he removed them to the cities from one end of the border of Egypt even to the other end thereof,* can hardly be understood of a general removal of the people from the country to the cities where the corn was stored; whereas the reading of the LXX., the Samaritan, and the Vulgate, *he made bondmen of them,* which is given in the margin, agrees exactly with the request of ver. 19, *buy us and our land for bread,* and should have found a place in the text. Again, in 2 Sam. xv. 7, *four* makes sense, and *forty* does not. Absalom could not have been hatching his rebellion for forty years. No notice is taken even in the margin of the fact that in 2 Sam. xxiv. 13 the LXX. agrees with 1 Chron. xxi. 12 in reading *three* for *seven* years of famine.¹

Opinions will differ as to the degree of corruption present in the Massoretic Text. No doubt it differs

¹ For further illustrations I may be allowed to refer to a paper read at the Church Congress at Portsmouth in 1885, p. 54 ff. of the official Report.

largely in different books. But it may be safely asserted that this text, as a whole, is superior to the LXX. as a whole. There does not appear to be any ground for the charges which were at one time freely made against the Jews, of corrupting the Old Testament Scriptures out of hostility to the Christian Church ; and there are not wanting indications that the scribes who were responsible for the Massoretic Text faithfully followed their ancient MSS. Peculiarities of different writers, archaisms, dialectic colouring, particular idioms, even unusual ways of writing, have in not a few cases been faithfully preserved.

The recognition of the relative superiority of the Massoretic Text must, however, by no means be taken to exempt it from criticism and emendation. To what aids, then, can we appeal for the purpose ? Little or nothing is to be gained from the most careful collation of Hebrew MSS., for, as has been pointed out, they all belong to one recension. It is only from the Versions which preserve traces of earlier forms of the text that help can be derived. In the use of this help much must depend on tact and judgment and instinct. The textual criticism of the Old Testament must go hand in hand with its exegesis. The ‘subjective element’ in it is necessarily large, and, in the absence of adequate materials, the methods by which this element has been reduced to a minimum in the textual criticism of the New Testament cannot be applied.

Under these circumstances, moreover, conjectural

emendation may find a place in the criticism of the Old Testament which would be wholly anomalous in the case of the New, where the documentary evidence is of such an entirely different character. It may even be our duty in the last resort to confess that the text is uncertain, and beyond the reach of even probable restoration.

Much of what has been said in this lecture may seem to some to be negative and destructive, and even mischievously unsettling. Why, it may be asked, should these doubts be raised about the integrity of the text? I answer (1) that honesty requires it. The cause of truth is ill served by concealing facts, or affirming uncertainties to be certainties. And (2) the attempt to maintain the absolute integrity of the Massoretic Text loads students of the Old Testament with a burden heavier than they can bear. There are enough real difficulties in it, without the addition of the adventitious difficulties which arise from trying to defend the soundness of a corrupt text.

It is no doubt one of the “trials of a new age” to find that “the text and the interpretation of the constituent parts of Holy Scripture have not been kept free from corruptions and ambiguities which require the closest exercise of critical skill.”¹ Perhaps younger scholars can hardly recognise the greatness of the trial to those who have been trained in traditional views. But here, as elsewhere, the

¹ Bishop Westcott, *Christus Consummator*, p. 7.

object of the removal of the things that are shaken is "that the things which are not shaken may remain."

It is not without instruction to remember that the LXX., which with all its value for interpretation and criticism is an imperfect and inadequate version, was for many centuries the only means by which the Old Testament was known to the Christian Church. The majority of the quotations in the New Testament are taken from it. Many of the ancient Versions were made from it, not from the original Hebrew. The Fathers were with rare exceptions ignorant of Hebrew, and dependent on the LXX. or other Versions.

From the undoubted fact that it has not been God's will to preserve the letter of Holy Scripture in a precise and unaltered form, and that the interpretation of the Scriptures is necessarily gradual and progressive, we may derive a clear warning against that worship of the letter into which the Jewish Church fell, and into which parts of the Christian Church have from time to time fallen. True, the spirit must be reached through the letter, and to the devout student even the smallest word of Holy Scripture will not be a matter of indifference. But the imperfections and uncertainties of the letter bid us look from the letter to the spirit; from the words to the truths which the words convey,—truths, we may be assured, unshaken and unimpaired by such defects as have been allowed to creep in; from these

truths, indeed, to HIM in whom all partial truths are summed up, and who is Himself the Truth to whom all the Scriptures point.

*“The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy
... Christ is all and in all.”*

LECTURE IV

THE INSPIRATION OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

διαιρέσεις δὲ χαρισμάτων εἰσίν, τὸ δὲ αὐτὸ πνεῦμα.—1 Cor. xi. 4.

THUS far we have considered the testimony, direct and indirect, which the books of the Old Testament give to their literary origin, and traced the history of their transmission through more than two thousand years. Our survey has necessarily been partial and superficial; but we have seen, in typical instances, that Holy Scripture is no book fallen from heaven in an ideal completeness, but is marked in every feature with signs of its human origin, with characteristics of place and age and circumstance and personality, and bears in many of its parts the evidence of a long and often complicated literary history. We have seen, moreover, that the Old Testament has not been exempted from the errors to which all works of literature are liable in the process of transmission.

Yet in all this diversity of *many parts and many fashions* there is a unity which binds together the various books into a single whole. It is no artificial and external uniformity, but a natural and organic unity of

life and spirit. Natural and undesigned, so far as the several authors of the many books collected in the Divine Library of the Old Testament are concerned, and therefore all the more attesting itself as supernatural and designed. For to the question, Whence comes this living unity which pervades and animates this whole in all its diverse parts ? the Christian student can make but one answer : that it comes from God Himself, who speaks through historian and prophet and psalmist. These books, in all their variety, are *oracles of God* ; they are *living oracles* ; and because the life which is their common characteristic was breathed into them by the Holy Ghost, *the Giver of life*, we agree to call them INSPIRED.

The Inspiration of Scripture ! It is a sacred and difficult subject, not to be handled without caution and reverence. Yet I should separate what is inseparable, and put asunder what God has joined together by an indissoluble bond, if I were to speak, as I have done in the preceding lectures, of the human origin of the Scriptures, without going on to speak, however inadequately and unworthily, of their Divine origin.

The unique position of the books of the Old Testament is assumed in the New Testament as an axiomatic truth. They are *holy Scriptures*, bearing in themselves the marks of a Divine origin ; *sacred writings*, fenced off as it were and distinguished from the mass of ordinary books. Nor are we left in doubt what is the source to which they owe this character. *God spake unto the fathers in the prophets ; the Spirit*

of Christ testified beforehand in them; *the Holy Ghost spoke* through the prophets; psalmists wrote in the *Holy Spirit*. Does the dignity and pre-eminence accorded to these Scriptures need illustration? It was the highest glory and prerogative of the Jews that *unto them were intrusted the oracles of God*. And from the whole treatment of the Old Testament Scriptures in the New Testament, even more than from explicit statement, it is clear that they are regarded as being of Divine origin, and as possessing Divine authority; as being, in fact, what we generally understand by the term *inspired*.

But no definition of inspiration is given in the New Testament—in fact, the word *inspired* is only once applied to the Scriptures, and in that case inspiration is rather assumed as an attribute (*every scripture inspired of God*) than affirmed as a predicate (*all scripture is given by inspiration of God*),—nor has any definition of it been given by the Church. Hence while the *fact* of inspiration is an essential article of the Christian faith, the *nature* of inspiration is left to be inferred from the Scriptures themselves. May we not venture to say that it is providential that it has been so? For as our conception of the operations of God in nature must necessarily be modified by the discoveries of science, so our view of the methods of God in the record of His revelation must inevitably be changed by the results of criticism. Theories of inspiration which once found wide acceptance are shattered to pieces on the hard rock of facts.

We are familiar with the old objections to the inspiration of the Old Testament drawn from its moral character. How, asks the sceptic, can you maintain that a book which contains such crude anthropomorphic representations of God, such imperfect ideas of morality, so much that is positively revolting to an enlightened conscience, is inspired? These old difficulties are still brought forward ; and they get their chief weight from the erroneous conceptions of what the Old Testament is, and what inspiration means, which have too often been put forward by defenders of the faith as though they were an integral part of the faith itself.

But in the present day we have new difficulties to meet, in view of the results at which criticism arrives as to the origin and character of the books of the Old Testament. In what sense, it is asked, can this legislation, which is now said to be Mosaic in elemental germ and idea only, and to represent not the inspired deliverance of a supremely great individual, but the painful efforts of many generations of law-makers ; these histories which have been compiled from primitive traditions, and chronicles, and annals, and what not ; these books of prophecy which are not the authentic autographs of the prophets, but posthumous collections of such writings—if any—as they left behind them, eked out by the recollections of their disciples ; these Proverbs and Psalms which have been handed down by tradition, and altered and edited and re-edited ; these histories

which contain errors of date and fact, and have been perhaps ‘idealised’ by the reflection of the circumstances and ideas of the writers’ own times upon a distant past ; these seeming narratives which may be allegories ; and these would-be prophecies which may be histories ;—in what sense can these be said to be *inspired*? The problems raised are grave. There are some to whom the inspiration and authority of Scripture seem to be seriously imperilled by critical inquiries, and they would bid us hold our hands for fear of the results to which they may lead. Unquestionably those who approach the Bible with preconceived ideas of what inspiration must be, and what must be the characteristics of an inspired book, may find much in the conclusions of modern criticism to shock and scandalise. But, as has been wisely said by Bishop Westcott,¹ “the student must not approach the inquiry” [into the origin and relations of the constituent books of the Old Testament] “with the assumption—sanctioned though it may have been by traditional use—that God must have taught His people, and us through His people, in one particular way. He must not presumptuously stake the inspiration and the Divine authority of the Old Testament on any foregone conclusion as to the method and shape in which the records have come down to us.” The Old Testament is placed in the hands of the Christian Church as the inspired, authoritative record of

¹ *Hebrews*, p. 493.

God's revelation of Himself to His chosen people, and of His education of that people. We accept it as such on the authority of Christ and His Apostles. But into the character and methods of that record we are free to examine—it is our duty to examine—by the help of all the faculties which God Himself has given us. “Fresh materials, fresh methods of inquiry, bring fresh problems and fresh trials.”¹ It cannot but be that as the day wears on, and the sunlight falls at an ever-changing angle, the observers, as they bring fresh instruments of greater power into play, should find the distant object of their scrutiny far different in the details of its structure from what they imagined in the morning twilight by the unassisted eye.

The majority of men, indeed, desire a clear-cut definite theory; but clear-cut definite theories may come into awkward conflict with facts, to the grave injury of those who have pledged themselves to stand or fall by them. And, indeed, no abstract discussion or formulated theory of inspiration is possible. Life is not a thing to be analysed and defined, but an energy to be recognised and observed in operation.

The gist of the matter is given in the familiar words, *Of old time God spake unto the fathers in the prophets*. The words affirm the harmonious union of the Divine and the human factors in indissoluble connexion. In theories of inspiration one factor has too often been brought into exclusive prominence

¹ Bishop Westcott, *Hebrews*, p. 492.

and the other passed over. A purely mechanical theory has practically ignored any real activity on the part of the human instrument; or an entirely subjective theory has virtually denied the reality of the Divine communication of truth which could not otherwise have been known. The proposition that "*Scripture is the word of God*" has been hardened into the dogma of the verbal inspiration and absolute inerrancy of every word of the Bible, and the Jewish theory of the dictation of the Pentateuch to Moses has been extended to the rest of the Old Testament; or, on the other hand, the proposition that "*Scripture contains the word of God*" has been volatilised till all distinction between Scripture and other books is obliterated, and the inspiration of Moses or Isaiah is held to be not materially different from the inspiration of Solon or Aeschylus.

The analogy between the Incarnate Word and the Written Word has often been noticed, but it is worth while to recall it once more in this connexion. In the doctrine of our Lord's Person, His Divinity has sometimes been allowed virtually to annihilate His true humanity; at other times His humanity has been made the exclusive object of attention so as practically to ignore His inalienable Divinity. So too it has fared with Holy Scripture.

The Bible is a unique book; but no absolute monopoly of truth is to be claimed for it, as sometimes seems to be asserted. God *left not Himself without witness* even in the heathen world. Not

seldom to the poet seers and philosophers "high thoughts beyond their thought were given." Yet elevate other literature, and deprecate this literature as you will, the distinction approves itself. No other literature is linked into one whole like this, instinct with one spirit and purpose, and, with all its variety of character and origin, moving forward to an unseen yet certain goal. No other literature is so intimately connected with a national life unique in its claims and its character.

Not that there are not books outside the Canon which might, to our individual judgment, have seemed worthy of a place in it, and books included in it whose presence there seems to us hard to account for. The distinction between canonical and deutero-canonical books may be less sharp and intelligible than was once commonly supposed. We may even acknowledge, as the ancient Jews did, various degrees or modes of inspiration within the Canon. God does not speak with the same immediateness or fulness or permanence of teaching in every part of all the books of Scripture. It is a natural inference from the distribution of the quotations in the New Testament, that some books were much read and almost known by heart, others little used and almost unknown. "In revelation and in the record of revelation all parts have a Divine work, but not the same work nor (as we speak) an equal work."¹ But still, speaking broadly, the selection

¹ Bishop Westcott, *Hebrews*, p. 4.

of the Canon approves itself as a providential selection, the mind of the Church answering to the Will of God; here we are within a sacred enclosure; the atmosphere is different from that which we breathe outside.

I have said that no abstract discussion of the nature of inspiration appears to be possible; and it seems to me that the consideration of the inspiration of the Old Testament may best be approached by a general consideration of the Divine purpose of which it is the record. For what is the Old Testament from the Christian point of view—and from no other point of view can it be rightly understood—but the record of God's gradual revelation of Himself to Israel in His purpose of redeeming love with a view to the establishment of His universal kingdom? The Incarnation was to be the culminating point of that revelation and that purpose. In it the old order was to be consummated and the new order to be founded. But for that unique event a long preparation was necessary. That preparation was carried on negatively and generally in the world at large, positively and specifically in the chosen people. The "father of the faithful" was called from his distant home and made the heir of the promise. Slowly yet surely the family grew into a nation. The nation, in spite of wilfulness and apostasy and failure, was shaped and moulded by the discipline of Law and the teaching of Prophets, by the rule of Judge and King and Priest, for its predestined task.

It grew to rankness in the days of its prosperity ; it was refined in the furnace of adversity ; it died in the Exile and came to life in the Return, a diminished but purified remnant of its former self, still in spite of itself led on towards the appointed end. Step by step God revealed Himself, and Israel became the trustee for the world of the primary truth of ethical monotheism. As He revealed Himself they learned little by little what Righteousness and Holiness mean, and in the awful light of the Divine attributes and the Divine demand on the nation and the individual that they should reflect those attributes, they grew to learn a deeper conception of the nature of sin and the need of Divine pardon and cleansing and renewal.

The institutions of the nation were all propaedeutic. The kingdom, with its unique idea of a king who was at once the representative of God to the people and of the people to God, who stood in a unique relation of sonship to Jehovah, and in virtue of that sonship was the heir of a world-wide inheritance, presented the type of a King to come who should establish a universal kingdom of peace and righteousness. The priesthood, with ritual of sacrifice, maintained the need of mediation and intercession between sinful man and a righteous God. The prophets pointed forward to the time when Zion should be the centre from which an universal revelation should issue. At length the great prophet, who in the days of the Exile strove to stir Israel to a

sense of its high calling as the *servant of the Lord* and of its failure to fulfil that mission, delineated the portraiture of the Ideal Servant, fulfilling for His people the work in which they had failed. King, Son, Priest, Prophet, Servant; what were they but unconnected and apparently parallel lines until they met in the One Person of Him who united and interpreted them all?

It is impossible to read the Old Testament with open eyes without seeing that we have there the record of the Divine plan and purpose worked out unhastingly, unrestingly, "in patient length of days." The revelation was gradual, progressive, manifold. God's purpose was one and the same throughout; His truth is one and unchanging. But the purpose must be wrought out step by step in successive ages, *in many fashions*; the truth must be communicated fragment by fragment, *in many parts*, as men were able to receive it. The child's perception of truth cannot be the same as the youth's, nor the youth's the same as the man's. The modes of education which are fitting for the child must gradually be changed as he passes from childhood to youth, and from youth to manhood. So it was in the education of the chosen nation; so it must be in the education of the human race.

The record of Revelation may be expected to correspond to the Revelation itself. In part the Old Testament narrates the history of the facts and the institutions in and through which God manifested

Himself and prepared the way for the accomplishment of His purposes; in part it preserves the messages of those whom He chose and commissioned directly to communicate His will; in part it records the thoughts and aspirations of those who lived under this system of Divine education, and responded to its influence. Now it is at least a reasonable hypothesis, that the same Providence which moulded the course of the history, and shaped the form of the institutions, would in some sort and degree superintend the record of them; that the same Teacher who spoke through the prophets would watch over the preservation of the records of their teaching for the instruction of future generations; that the same Spirit who stirred the feelings and emotions of the holy men of old would not let the response of their hearts to that awakening be lost and vanish out of hand. The idea of an inspired record is the natural correlative to the idea of a Divine revelation; and the inspired record may be expected to reflect the characteristics of the revelation. But as we have no right to determine for ourselves *a priori* what the character and methods of a Divine revelation must be—Bishop Butler long ago warned us against that—so neither have we any right to determine *a priori* by what methods that Divine revelation will be recorded, and what must be the precise character of the record. No! we must go to the record itself, and endeavour to learn from it in what ways and by what methods and under what conditions God was

pleased to preserve the record of His dealings with Israel and His words spoken to Israel *for our admonition upon whom the ends of the ages are come.*

Let us then approach the Old Testament, and try to pick out some of the characteristic features, positive and negative, which may help us, not indeed to define inspiration or formulate a theory of it, but to understand somewhat better what an inspired book is, and what—popular ideas notwithstanding—it does not profess to be. With this view, let us look first at those accounts of the childhood of the world, which, as we have seen, recent discoveries show to have been current among the Babylonians as well as among the Israelites. The common origin of the Chaldaean and the biblical narratives of the Creation and the Flood cannot be disputed. But with all their striking similarity, there are yet more striking differences between them. What power is it that has taken these primitive traditions of the human race, purified them from their grossness and their polytheism, and made them at once the foundation and the explanation of the long history that is to follow?¹ Surely it was the Holy Spirit of God working, as it is the economy of Divine method to work, upon existing materials. Jehovah did not “obliterate the whole contents of the religious consciousness of the Abrahamic family” when He called Abraham to leave his country and his kindred and his father’s house. He did not create afresh their whole mental

¹ See Bishop Moorhouse’s *Teaching of Christ*, pp. 4 ff.

furniture. But He did elevate and purify that religious consciousness. When Abraham in faith obeyed that call, he left behind him the gods which his fathers had served in their Mesopotamian home. He did mould that mental furniture into a new shape and for a definite purpose. We do not know how the primitive legends came into existence, but we can see how they were transformed by inspiration to convey fundamental truths with regard to Creation and Divine judgment upon human sin, which it was essential should be known. The first chapter of Genesis is not, as we now know, a scientifically exact account of Creation ; the account of the Fall is, it may be, an allegory rather than a history in the strict sense of the term ;¹ the Deluge was not universal in the sense that the waters covered the whole surface of the entire globe. But I think we may confidently say that the account of Creation presents the essential *religious* truths concerning the origin of the universe in a form which is as unrivalled for majestic simplicity as it is inexhaustible in profound significance ; that the story of the Fall explains the entry of evil into the world which God made with a solemn pathos in a way which is at once the condemnation and the consolation of humanity ; that the narrative of the Flood is a parable of judgment and mercy which will never become antiquated till the completion of that final exhibition of judgment and mercy of which it is the type. These narratives convey their

¹ See Note C.

lessons in a form which is intelligible to the least educated race and to the youngest child, and yet will never cease to grow in meaning for the most cultured race and the wisest sage. They proclaim with Divine authority truths which man needs to know, but which, apart from revelation, he could only have guessed.

And for the rest of the Pentateuch, if the Mosaic law was Mosaic in germ only and not in its complete development, are we therefore to say that it was not Israel's divinely-given schoolmaster, or that the record of it cannot be inspired? May we not see an analogy between the record of Creation and the record of the Mosaic legislation? The work, which is pictorially represented as completed in a week of six successive days, we now know from the researches of geology to have been extended over vast periods of untold duration as we reckon time. And so, too, the legislation which is connected in its completed form with the delivery of its original elements during the forty years' wandering in the wilderness, historical criticism is leading us to regard as the outcome of centuries of national life. To the eternal present of the Divine mind "all creation is one act at once," and from the concentration and condensation of the record we may be intended to learn the unity of Divine plan and purpose which was operative alike through the aeons of creation and the centuries of Israel's history.

If Deuteronomy is not the *ipsissima verba* of Moses, but a prophetic re-casting of Mosaic elements,

are the truths which it contains less true? May we not believe that he has found a faithful interpreter, who wrote through the inspiration of the same spirit by which he spoke, putting old lessons into the new form which his own age needed?

Turn from the Pentateuch to the Historical Books. Do not they too bear the marks of Divine superintendence? Partial and incomplete and disproportioned they are, if we view them as histories of the nation. How much is left untold which we would gladly know, in order to understand the course of history, or the relations of Israel to its neighbours, or the character of social life at various periods of the kingdom. But with all that is passed over in silence, how striking a view do these compilations from ancient records present of the religious history of the nation and the steady evolution of God's purposes in spite of Israel's frowardness. They interpret the course of Israel's history in its relation to the history of Redemption, and in this we discern the marks of their inspiration.

What need is there to speak of the inspiration of the Prophets? Whence came those sublime views of God, those lofty ideas of His righteousness, His lovingkindness, His faithfulness, His holiness, those inflexible convictions of His corresponding demands on men, those deepeningly spiritual conceptions of the meaning of sacrifice? Whence sprang that inextinguishable certainty in days of evil rule that a Divine kingdom of truth and righteousness must

ultimately be established ; that undaunted proclamation at the moment when the old covenant seemed on the point of being cancelled that a new covenant should be made and written in the heart of every Israelite ; that unhesitating prediction at the time when Israel lay prostrate in the dust, a captive exile, that Israel should yet fulfil his mission to the world ? Whence came these things but from the Spirit of God speaking in the prophets ? Natural growths out of a soil where religious ideas germinated spontaneously, some would call them. But spontaneous germination is unknown in nature. There must have been a seed. Nor is it so clear that Israel was really a favourable soil for the growth of pure and high religious thought ; and tender plants do not come to maturity without constant superintendence. Splendid ideals, noble aspirations, sublime imaginations—is that a sufficient account of prophecies which were *fulfilled* in ways transcending human thought ? Nay, it was *the Spirit of Christ* that *testified beforehand in them* ; and whatever may be the literary relation of the prophetic records to the original prophetic words, they still speak to us as *the voices of the prophets*,—an authentic and sufficient record of the testimony of that goodly fellowship.

And the Psalms ? What of them ? Let me answer the question in the words of a master of insight and eloquence. “ Where, in those rough, cruel days, did they come from, those piercing, lightning-like gleams of strange spiritual truth, those

magnificent outlooks over the kingdom of God, those raptures at His presence and His glory, those wonderful disclosures of self-knowledge, those pure outpourings of the love of God? Surely here is something more than the mere working of the mind of man. Surely they tell of higher guiding, prepared for all time; surely, as we believe, they hear *the word behind them saying, This is the way, walk ye in it,* they repeat the whispers of the Spirit of God, they reflect the very light of the Eternal Wisdom. In that wild time there must have been men sheltered and hidden amid the tumult round them, humble and faithful and true, to whom the Holy Ghost could open by degrees the *wondrous things of His law*, whom He taught, and whose mouths he opened, to teach their brethren by their own experience, and to do each their part in the great preparation.”¹

Yes! in that varied record of the Old Testament, in law and history and prophecy and psalm, we hear the voice of the living God, condescending to work and speak within the limits of a narrow nationality, in order ultimately to instruct the world. The more patiently we study the manifold ways in which eternal truths are enshrined in facts and words, the more surely shall we perceive that these writings are no mere natural growth or development, but instinct with a life which could only have come from the one unfailing *Fountain of life*, replete with truth which could only have flowed from the one inexhaustible

¹ Dean Church, *Discipline of the Christian Character*, p. 57.

source of truth, radiating light which could only have come down from the one eternal *Father of lights*. So God speaks to men, through men, in human language, and the old words still speak to those *who have ears to hear*.

Such are some of the characteristics of the inspired books, which enable us to feel the reality of their inspiration, though we may not be able to formulate a precise definition of it. But it will be well further to note explicitly some things which an examination of the inspired books teaches us that inspiration does not do. Once more let me repeat emphatically that we have no other means than such an examination for judging what may or may not be compatible with inspiration.

(1) Inspiration does not, as we have seen, involve independence of existing records whether traditional or written, nor of historical research, nor of the literary methods of the time. Inspiration took the primeval traditions of the race and purified them and moulded them anew to convey its message. It took prophetic narratives and state annals and folk-ballads and current traditions, and, looking back over a long period, selected portions of these materials, and wove them into the texture of a history which should sum up and interpret the lessons of that period, and bring them into relation with the course of God's providential purposes. But in so doing the historians were not exempted from the need of care and diligence and research. If an Evangelist

claims a hearing for his presentation of the Gospel on the ground that he had *traced the course of all things accurately from the first*, the writers of the Old Testament, we may be sure, do not stand upon an essentially different footing. They used, as we have seen, the methods of composition current in their time and country ; and this consideration should lead us to abstain from making dogmatic *a priori* assertions as to what kinds of literary composition may or may not be found in the Bible. If, for example, allegory was a familiar mode of instruction, what right have we to assert (as some do) that the Old Testament cannot contain allegories, nay even what we call myths? For, as the Archbishop of Canterbury pointed out not long ago, we have in the Holy Scriptures the fullest use made of poetry in all its forms. “Even fable, in the fullest meaning of the word, is used to convey Divine truth,—not only parable but fable. Then are we prepared positively to lay it down as a thing not to be credited that the Spirit of God had ever used what we now call myth?”¹ If we say that, we lay down a canon which the Church never ruled. Are we prepared to say that it was impossible that the Divine Spirit could ever have made use of that one remaining form of literature? Shall we tell our people that if certain passages are a myth then the whole of the Bible is untrue? That would be a most dangerous course.”²

¹ See Note C.

² Report of the Canterbury Diocesan Conference, 1890, p. 41.

(2) Inspiration does not guarantee absolute immunity from error in matters of science or fact or history. Thus, for example, the narratives of creation in the first chapter of Genesis, while it presents a most remarkable counterpart to the discoveries of science, cannot be said to tally precisely with the records written in the rocks, so far at any rate as they have been read at present. Nor need we be troubled if it does not, nor strive anxiously for a literal harmony. God's two great books of the Bible and of Nature each contain truths which are not and could not be communicated by the other. Each of them must be studied by the help of the light which is thrown upon it by the other, but the purpose and the limitations peculiar to each must never be forgotten.

Again, in the department of history, the decipherment of the cuneiform inscriptions, while it has illustrated the Old Testament from many points of view and confirmed its accuracy in not a few instances, makes it plain that the biblical chronology is far from exact, and must in many cases be corrected by the help of the more precise Assyrian system of reckoning.¹

¹ It sometimes appears to be assumed that the use of the Old Testament by our Lord and His Apostles is an attestation of its absolute historical accuracy. It may therefore not be superfluous to quote Paley's words on this point.

"Undoubtedly our Saviour assumes the Divine origin of the Mosaic institution... and recognises the prophetic character of many of the ancient writers [of the Jews]. So far therefore we are bound as Christians to go. But to make Christianity answerable with its life for the circumstantial truth of each separate passage of the Old Testament, the genuineness of every book, the information, fidelity, and judgment of every writer in it, is to bring, I will not say great,

(3) Inspiration does not exclude imperfection and relativity and accommodation. The Old Testament is not an instantaneous, complete, final communication of absolute truth. What holds good of God's revelation of Himself to Israel, must hold good of the record of it. The failure to bear this in mind has given rise to much misunderstanding. Take one or two illustrations. Human sacrifice cannot be acceptable to God ; yet in an age when human sacrifices were common, Abraham's faith could be tested by the command to slay his son. No trial could so unmistakably have exhibited the unswerving loyalty of his devotion to Jehovah, and in relation to the circumstances of the time the command and the readiness to obey it are alike intelligible, and the record of it is preserved in the Bible without fear of its being misunderstood.

In an age when wars of extermination were but unnecessary difficulties into the whole system. These books were universally read and received by the Jews of our Saviour's time. He and His Apostles, in common with all other Jews, referred to them, alluded to them, used them.

. . . "In this view, our Scriptures afford a valuable testimony to those of the Jews. But the nature of this testimony ought to be understood. It is surely very different from what it is sometimes represented to be, a specific ratification of each particular fact and opinion ; and not only of each particular fact, but of the motives assigned for every action, together with the judgment of praise or dispraise bestowed upon them. . . . A reference in the New Testament to a passage in the Old does not so fix its authority as to exclude all inquiry into its credibility, or into the separate reasons upon which that credibility is founded, and it is an unwarrantable as well as unsafe rule to lay down concerning the Jewish history, what was never laid down concerning any other, that either every particular of it must be true, or the whole false."—*Evidences*, Part iii. ch. 3.

common and not repugnant to the moral sense, the Israelites could be employed as the executioners of a judgment upon the Canaanites which they richly deserved ; but it does not follow that the form which that judgment took is one which was meant for the admiration, still less for the imitation, of later ages.

In days when no distinction was made between evil and the evil man, and when the triumph of evil seemed to mean the defeat of God's kingdom and the withdrawal of His sovereignty from the world, men could pray for the destruction of their enemies, and their prayers are preserved even in the most spiritual part of the inspired volume.

The form in each case was relative to the ideas and circumstances and limitations of the age ; but inspiration records them as lessons of unquestioning devotion, of inevitable judgment upon irremediable profligacy, of the duty of moral indignation and uncompromising hatred of evil. The truth, the Divine and eternal truth, is there if we will look for it, beneath the outward form which belongs to the circumstances of the age.

We raise untold and insoluble difficulties for ourselves if we fail to recognise to the full that the Bible is not homogeneous in all its parts, but is the record of a gradual and progressive revelation which was made known to men by slow degrees as they could bear it ; and that inspiration has not obliterated the steps of progress and raised all to one uniform standard, but shows us, for our instruction, God's

untiring patience in the gradual education of His people, and through them of the human race.

The caution is not unnecessary, for the old Jewish error of bibliolatry has survived into modern times. There have been those who have treated the Bible as an end, and not a means. They have searched the Scriptures as though they thought that in them they had eternal life. They have “set up their theory of Holy Scripture against the Divine purpose of it,” and in their zeal for their theory have almost lost sight of the cardinal fact, that that purpose is to lead us to know God, and God in Christ.

Thus, then, even if it should come to be the generally received opinion that the Law was not written by Moses, but codified in its present form by Ezra and the priests after the Return from Babylon; even if we should have to believe that the teaching of the prophets preceded the discipline of the Law, and was its foundation rather than its interpretation; even if we should be compelled to admit, with whatever regret, that we possess few, if any, relics of the poetry of him whose name is most closely associated with the Psalter; even if we should be forced to acknowledge that what we once supposed to be literal history is but “truth embodied in a tale,” and that some parts of the history have been coloured by the conceptions of the age in which it was written long after the events themselves, like the work of a mediæval painter depicting the scenes of the first century

with the scenery and dress of the sixteenth ; even if there are some books which we find it hard to fit into their place as parts of the record of revelation, and in which we cannot easily discern the marks of inspiration ; even if all this should come to be so—and I am very far from thinking myself that the extreme views with regard to date and character of some of the books of the Old Testament which are now put forward in some quarters will long hold their ground in the face of sober criticism—in spite of all that has been or will be said to depreciate the Old Testament, the life is there. The Book lives. The Church accepts it upon the authority of Christ and His Apostles, and with whatever occasional and temporary intermissions of care and regard, she will continue to accept and use it, and will—so we are convinced—learn through the attacks of enemies as well as through the labours of friends, to understand it more truly, and value it more worthily.

In conclusion, let me commend to your reflection the double proof of the inspiration of the Old Testament which is to be derived from the essential unity which characterises it, and from the response of the soul to its message. Of the first of these proofs I have already spoken incidentally, but I should like to sum up and emphasise what I have said by the quotation of words more weighty and eloquent than my own could possibly be. “The Bible,” writes Bishop Westcott in *The Bible*

*in the Church,*¹ “contains in itself the fullest witness to its Divine authority. If it appears that a large collection of fragmentary records, written, with few exceptions, without any designed connexion, at most distant times and under the most varied circumstances, yet combine to form a definite whole, broadly separated from other books ; if it further appear that these different parts when interpreted historically reveal a gradual progress of social spiritual life, uniform at least in its general direction ; if without any intentional purpose they offer not only remarkable coincidences in minute details of facts, for that is a mere question of accurate narration, but also subtle harmonies of complementary doctrine ; if in proportion as they are felt to be separate they are felt also to be instinct with a common spirit ; then it will be readily acknowledged that however they came into being first, however they were united afterwards into the sacred volume, they are yet legibly stamped with the Divine seal as ‘inspired by God’ in a sense in which no other writings are.”

The proof of the Divine inspiration of the Bible which is derived from the essential unity of spirit which characterises it in spite of the manifold diversity in form and substance of its different parts is confirmed by the response of the soul to its message, or perhaps we should rather say, by the marvellous way in which, by the consentient

¹ P. 14.

testimony of one generation of Christians after another, its message *finds* the human soul. Let me borrow the well-known words of Coleridge, in his *Letters on the Inspiration of the Scriptures*,¹ to express this thought. After telling us how he had re-perused the books of the Old and New Testament—each book as a whole, and also as an integral part,—he continues thus—

“Need I say that I have met everywhere more or less copious sources of truth, and power, and purifying impulses; that I have found words for my inmost thoughts, songs for my joy, utterances for my hidden griefs, and pleadings for my shame and my feebleness? In short, whatever *finds* me, bears witness for itself that it has proceeded from a Holy Spirit, even from the same Spirit, *which remaining in itself, yet regenerateth all other powers, and in all ages entering into holy souls maketh them friends of God and prophets* (*Wisdom*, vii. 27).”

In such wise then will come to the devout and loving student of Holy Scripture a continuous personal verification of its inspiration in the experience of life.

Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and light unto my path.

¹ Letter i.

LECTURE V

THE USE OF THE OLD TESTAMENT IN THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH

ἐγράφη δὲ πρὸς νουθεσίαν ἡμῶν, εἰς οὓς τὰ τέλη τῶν αἰώνων κατήντηκεν.—1 COR. x. 11.

THE permanent value of the Old Testament for the Christian Church is attested in the New Testament even more by the use made of it than by positive statement. Positive statements there are of the most definite kind. *Think not*, said the Lord Himself as He promulgated in the Mount the law of His new kingdom, *that I came to destroy the law or the prophets; I came not to destroy but to fulfil*. There may have been some among His audience who thought that He who came from God with a new message for mankind would begin His work by abrogating the laws and superseding the teaching of the old order. There have been those, both within and without the Christian Church, who have virtually or explicitly maintained that He did so. But such was not the Divine method. The Old Testament was not as it were the scaffolding

necessary for the erection of the Christian Church, needing to be taken down in order that the full symmetry and beauty of the building may be seen. It is an integral part of the structure. The Prophets as well as the Apostles are the foundation upon which the Christian Church is built. In all the many parts and many fashions of the revelation made to Israel it was God Himself who spake, and no Divine Word can be without some measure of permanent significance in virtue of the Divine truth which it contains, albeit that truth may be embodied in a form which is local and temporary. The new order must preserve and develop all that was essential in the old. The Old Testament leads up to Christ, and Christ takes it and puts it back into our hands as a completed whole. He bids us study it as ‘fulfilled’ in Him, and “put ourselves to school with every part of it.” The old lesson-book is not to be thrown away or kept merely as an archaeological curiosity. It is to be re-studied in the light of the further revelation of Christ’s life and teaching and work.

What the Lord Himself affirmed His Apostles continued to teach after His departure. *Whatsoever things were written aforetime*, says St. Paul as he quotes a passage from the Psalms, *were written for our learning, that through patience and through comfort of the scriptures we might have hope* (Rom. xv. 4). *These things*, says St. Paul again, with reference to the history of the Israelites in the

wilderness, *happened unto them by way of example; and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages are come* (1 Cor. x. 11).

Once more, in a letter which derives an especial solemnity from the fact that it was written in the prospect of approaching martyrdom, and is as it were his last will and testament to his disciple, St. Paul points Timothy to the Old Testament Scriptures as a safeguard and security co-ordinate with the apostolic teaching which he had received, to confirm his steadfastness in the faith under the stress of persecution and prevalent false teaching; and he takes occasion to add an emphatic testimony to the permanent value of *every inspired scripture* for the instruction of the Christian Church. *Abide thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; and that from a babe thou hast known the sacred writings which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. Every scripture inspired of God is also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness: that the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work* (2 Tim. iii. 14-17).

But more emphatically even than by direct statements do Evangelists and Apostles bear witness by their large and constant use of the Old Testament, that they regarded it as having a permanent value and authority for the Christian Church, and as con-

taining a depth and fulness of meaning, which could only be understood gradually in the light of the consummation of Christ's life and work. The familiar saying of St. Augustine, *Vetus Testamentum in Novo patet*, "The Old Testament is explained in the New," receives manifold illustration from almost every page of the New Testament, and sums up the spirit in which the writings of the old dispensation are treated. The spiritual life of our Lord not less than of the Apostles was fed and nourished upon the Old Testament. It furnished Him and them with weapons against the tempter and with consolations in the hour of sharpest agony. It supplied them with argument and challenge in the controversy with those who denied His Messiahship. It is the source of the imagery by which thought and imagination are stimulated and carried forward to the glories of heaven and the final consummation of all things.

The use of the Old Testament in the New is a subject worthy of the closest study, as throwing a flood of light upon the deeper meaning of the Old Testament. There are indeed instances in which at first sight quotations seem to be merely verbal and superficial, reflecting the methods of the Jewish schools ; but a closer examination will always, it is believed, reveal some underlying principle which explains the quotation, and makes it an example of the deeper sense of Scripture. The sober and reasonable use of the Old Testament in the New forms a

striking and instructive contrast to the arbitrary allegorical system of interpretation which is to be found in contemporary Jewish writings, such as those of the Alexandrian Philo, or in the earliest post-apostolic Christian writings, such as the Epistle of Barnabas.

It might indeed be asked whether this was not merely a transitional stage, while the New Testament was non-existent, and whether, when the apostolic writings had been collected and recognised by the Christian Church as an inspired authority, they did not supersede the Old Testament. Of such an idea there is no hint in the New Testament. “When the Epistle to the Hebrews was written, it might have seemed that there was nothing for the Christian to do, but either to cling to the letter of the Jewish Bible or to reject it altogether. But the Church was more truly instructed by the voice of the Spirit; and the answer to the anxious questionings of the first age which the Epistle contains has become part of our inheritance. We know now, with an assurance which cannot be shaken, that the Old Testament is an essential part of our Christian Bible. We know that the Law is neither a vehicle and a veil for spiritual mysteries, as Philo thought, nor a delusive riddle, as is taught in the Epistle of Barnabas.”¹

So writes the Bishop of Durham; yet we are told that in the present day the Old Testament is not seldom neglected, and we know but too well that

¹ Bishop Westcott, *Hebrews*, p. 492.

it has been grievously misunderstood and misinterpreted in past times. "A theory," wrote Professor Cheyne in the *Contemporary Review* some two years ago, "is already propounded both in private and in a naïve, simple way in sermons, that the Old Testament is of no particular moment, all that we need being the New Testament, which has been defended by our valiant apologists, and expounded by our admirable interpreters."¹ Hear another witness from the Nonconformist bodies. "Quite a dangerous neglect of the Old Testament," wrote Principal Cave in the same periodical last year, "that unique literary monument of the past world, has characterised Christian thinking all too long. I have even heard of a prominent Nonconformist minister so preferring the New Testament to the Old in reading lessons, as to use in public no part of the Old Testament except the Psalms. And even where the Old Testament has not been ignored, too frequently its poetry has been spiritualised beyond recognition, and its prose has been wholly removed from its historical setting; whilst as for its magnificent prophecy, it has been rendered unintelligible by crude extravagance."²

Such a neglect of the Old Testament, if these statements are justified by facts, is a most serious and dangerous symptom. It is an unfaithfulness to the spirit of the teaching of Christ and His Apostles which can be nothing less than disastrous to the

¹ *Contemporary Review*, August 1889 p. 232.

² *Ibid.*, April 1890, p. 538.

building up of the Christian Church, as well as to the growth and establishment of the faith of its individual members. It is true that we in the Church of England are preserved by the possession of our lectionary from an entire disuse of the Old Testament; yet it may be questioned whether it forms as large a part of our ordinary teaching as it ought to do. How many sermons on the Old Testament are preached in most churches in the course of a year? I do not mean sermons on texts from the Old Testament, using Old Testament words in a Christian sense, irrespective of their original meaning and context; but sermons showing the providential purpose, and enforcing the specific lessons of the Old Testament. I do not know that we have improved as we ought to have done since Bishop Patteson wrote in 1869, only two years before his martyrdom :—

“ Every day convinces me more and more of the need of a different mode of teaching than that usually adopted for imperfectly taught people. . . . Who teaches in ordinary parishes the Christian use of the Psalms? Who puts simply before peasant and stone-cutter the Jew and his religion, and what he and it were intended to be, and the real error and sin and failure?—the true nature of prophecy, the progressive teaching of the Bible, never in any age compromising truth, but never ignoring the state, so often the un-receptive state, of those to whom the truth must therefore be presented partially, and in a manner

adapted to rude and unspiritual natures? What an amount of preparatory teaching is needed! What labour must be spent in struggling to bring forth things new and old, and present things simply before the indolent, unthinking, vacant mind! . . . It is such downright hard work to teach well.”¹

To what then is this comparative neglect of the Old Testament due? Partly perhaps to the feeling, in itself true and right, that the New Testament, as the special charter of the Christian Church, demands our first and most careful attention, and that its teaching is at once more spiritual and more readily intelligible; while the Old Testament is largely concerned with a bygone order of things, and is vast and vague and obscure of interpretation.

But we cannot with impunity neglect a whole region of our inheritance, if some pains are needed to explore it and labour in it before we can reap its harvest. We cannot be content with the produce of the ground which seems—but only seems—to be ready to yield fruit of itself, without strenuous effort on our part.

Partly, again, neglect may be the Nemesis of misuse. It may in certain quarters be due to a reaction from that unlimited licence of interpretation which has too often converted the Old Testament into something little better than a playground for the exercise of a curious ingenuity, and pointed the contemptuous sarcasm of the epigrammatist—

¹ *Life of J. C. Pateson*, vol. ii. p. 374.

“ Hic liber est in quo quaerit sua dogmata quisque,
Invenit et pariter dogmata quisque sua.”

Men have invented their theories of the double, the triple, the quadruple sense of Holy Scripture, nay they have lost themselves in a whole “forest of senses,” they have imposed their own arbitrary meanings on the sacred text, instead of striving patiently and prayerfully so to train and educate the ears of their understanding, that they might hear the voice of God speaking to them through its words. I do not mean for a moment to say that there is no “deeper sense” of the Old Testament, or that God has not spoken to men through His Word even when they have most strangely misinterpreted it. But each age has its own methods of study and temper of thought. The methods of the present day are historical and scientific, and the temper of modern thought leads many to revolt against the mystical treatment of the Old Testament. There is a danger lest the revolt should lead to disuse instead of to the endeavour to substitute for an arbitrary allegorising that sober historical interpretation which appears to be the work to which our age is specially called.

But in addition to these causes there is a third which is beginning to be widely operative. There is a vague suspicion floating about that the “higher criticism” has raised a host of questions about the date and composition and character of the books of the Old Testament, which must be settled before we

can use it again with any confidence, or which, it is supposed, have been already settled, or are on the high road to being settled, in such a way that the Old Testament must be thrown aside as a discredited book.

Such an attitude is, as I have already shown, a desertion of the teaching and the example of the New Testament. It is inconsistent with the courage which is born of faith. It is a distrust of the promise that the Holy Spirit, by whose inspiration we believe those ancient Scriptures to have been given, is still present with the Church to guide us into all the truth, and to enable us to retain old truths in the light of new discoveries. It is a neglect of the apostolic precept to *prove all things*, and *hold fast that which is good*. It may be that many of the problems raised with regard to the Old Testament do not admit of solution ; but I am sure that the way to approach them is neither with the fierce denunciation of unreasoning panic nor with the blind acceptance of unreasoning admiration. There are large parts of the Old Testament which are practically unaffected for Christian use by present critical controversies ; there are other parts in regard to which the newer views will probably soon win their way to general acceptance ; and for the rest, we must not let critical uncertainties paralyse us and hinder us from the use of the Book which cannot be foregone without loss to ourselves and the Church. The Old Testament has been placed in the hands of the

Christian Church by our Lord and His Apostles, and commended to our diligent study; and while we maintain that it is the duty of those who can do so to pursue every method of investigation which will throw light upon the Bible, we need not fear that the simplest student who approaches it in the spirit of Christ will be misled or deceived in any essential matter.

The Bible has been compared to a great Church which it needed some fifteen centuries to build. "Of that temple the Old Testament is the nave, with its side aisles of psalm and prophecy; and the Gospels are the choir—the last Gospel, perhaps, the very sanctuary; while around and behind are the Apostolic Epistles and the Apocalypse, each a gem of beauty, each supplying an indispensable feature to the majestic whole."¹ Now if I may develop that figure, it is not essential for the ordinary spectator to know at what precise date each part of the Church was built, still less from what quarry the stones were brought, or whether old materials from some earlier Church were incorporated in parts of the buildings. He can learn the lessons of grandeur and beauty, of holiness and devotion, which the whole building teaches; he can see how it reflects the mind and purpose of its architects, even without this detailed knowledge, though the knowledge may add to his intelligent wonder and appreciation, and is essential for the study of the history and development of archi-

¹ Canon Liddon, *Sermon on the Worth of the Old Testament*, p. 29.

ture. And so surely it is with the Old Testament. It is important, with a view to the study of the history and development of the religion of Israel, to fix the relative dates of the writings contained in the Old Testament, and the student must labour patiently at the task. But there is much, very much, that the Old Testament has to teach us which is independent of questions of date and authorship, and we must not abandon the attempt to learn the lessons, until all the problems which await solution are satisfactorily decided. For most knowledge is progressive, and it is only through tentative efforts and partial failures that progress is secured ; and it is often true that we learn more in the process of learning than from the lesson when it is learnt.

Let me now endeavour to suggest some of the ways in which the Old Testament is to be studied, some of the uses of it which can never become obsolete in the Christian Church.

(1) There is the historic use. The Old Testament is the historic foundation of Christianity, the record of the long, patient, manifold preparation for the Incarnation. I have said already that the Old Testament can never be understood unless it is studied from this point of view ; but, further, it is difficult to overestimate the importance for the Christian Church of the constant study of it in this aspect. It is hardly possible to imagine what the difficulty of belief in the stupendous miracle of the Incarnation would have been, if it had come as a

sudden isolated event in the world's history, and not as the consummation and the interpretation of a unique national life, recorded in an equally unique national literature. As it is, the marvel of the Incarnation, with all its infinite significance, stands buttressed on the one side by the history of the Jewish Church, on the other side by the history of the Christian Church. The one leads up to it, the other springs out of it; it accounts for both, and is attested by both. The Old Testament "does not merely contain prophecies; it is from first to last a prophecy." This mode of studying the Old Testament is in fact the study of the argument from prophecy. That argument has sometimes been sadly misused. Its exponents have too often been content to point to a few striking passages, some of which will not bear the interpretation put upon them when they are critically examined, instead of patiently showing how little by little God disciplined His people, and taught them by the types of King and Prophet and Priest and Servant, and awakened in them the longing for a fuller knowledge of Him, and a real assurance of pardon for sin and cleansing of the heart, and some illumination of the dark mystery of the grave, until Christ came and fulfilled all and more than all.

We are familiar with the idea of the 'fulfilment' of prophecy. But that idea is often unduly limited. Prophecy is not "inverted history." It was not a reflection beforehand by which men could foreknow what was to come. It was rather the seed and germ

out of which in due time plant and flower and fruit were to be developed. Prophecy kept men's eyes fixed upon the future ; it created a sense of need ; it stirred deep and earnest longings ; it stimulated hope. And then, at length, the fulfilment came, and gathered into one unimagined reality all the various lines of thought and longing and hope, in a completeness and a glory far transcending all anticipation. The fulfilment could not have been conjectured from the prophecy, any more than the oak tree could, apart from experience, be conjectured from the acorn ; but as the oak tree can be seen in the acorn, so the fulfilment can be seen in the prophecy. It answers to it, and bears witness to the working of the one Divine purpose, steadily moving towards its final goal of man's redemption. 'Fulfilment' does not exhaust prophecy. It interprets it, and gathers up its scattered elements into a new combination, possessing fresh and abiding and ever-increasing significance.

But perhaps it may be thought that this historic study of the Old Testament as the preparation for Christ's coming may be safely left to professed apologists, whose business it is to provide arguments for the defence of the faith. It is a most fatal mistake to think so. At no time, least of all at the present time, can believers afford to neglect the use of any means in their power for the confirmation of their own faith, and thereby of the faith of others. And this is an argument the force of which is most felt by each as he studies it for himself. It is an

argument which can to some extent be appreciated by all, though it can scarcely be mastered in all its fulness by any one. I am sure that those of us who are teachers ought to study it more and teach it more. The quiet exposition of truth is often its best defence. We remember how the poet describes the beloved disciple meeting the heresies which began to spring up in his old age by the calm rehearsal of the simple facts :—

“ Patient I stated much of the Lord’s life
Forgotten or misdelivered, and let it work.”

And so it will surely be with the exposition of the Old Testament preparation for that life. We need to restate patiently much that has been “forgotten or misdelivered” and to “let it work.” The argument from prophecy is neither exploded nor exhausted.

(2) The study of the Old Testament is indispensable for the right interpretation of the New Testament. The language of the New Testament is Greek, but it is the Greek which has been wedded to Hebrew thought in the Septuagint Version of the Old Testament, and it cannot be rightly understood without constant reference to that Version and to the Hebrew which underlies it. The theological ideas of the New Testament have their root in the Old Testament, and must be studied there if we would fully understand them. Terms such as righteousness, justification, holiness, sin, propitiation, sacrifice, atonement, are not new coinages. They

have already a history when they are adopted, with whatever modification or expansion of meaning, in the New Testament.

How, again, can we understand the full significance of our Lord's work unless we study it in relation to the various elements of the preparation for His coming ? How, for example, can we appreciate the force of words like these ? *Our Saviour Christ Jesus, who abolished death, and brought life and incorruption to light through the gospel* (2 Tim. i. 10); or these : *that through death . . . he might deliver all them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage* (Heb. ii. 15), if we do not learn from the study of the Old Testament with what a leaden weight the mystery of the grave pressed upon men's souls under the old dispensation ; a mystery which could only be solved with full assurance of personal hope in the triumph of Christ's Resurrection.

Some of these questions may be thought chiefly to concern those who are specially called to devote their time to the study and interpretation of the Bible, rather than those who, in the press of work and daily duties, can only give a limited time to it. But there is one aspect in which I think that the study of the Old Testament has a most important bearing on the interpretation of the New Testament in relation to Christian faith and hope for all of us. There are times, I suppose, when most of us feel faint-hearted about the prospects of the Church of Christ, perplexed to know how the kingdom

of Christ is ever to become universally triumphant, at a loss to imagine how that final consummation of all things can ever be reached, when God shall be *all in all*. We are familiar with the wise saying of that great student of the Bible and of history, Bishop Lightfoot, that “the best cordial for drooping spirits is the study of history.” It is true ; and the most accessible form of this cordial for most of us is the study of history as it is recorded for us in the pages of the Old Testament. For there we can read in simple language the story of the great Divine purpose gradually being wrought out in spite of human weakness and human perversity, nay, overruling them to its own ends. Israel had not courage to take the straight road to Canaan ; but it was brought there in the end, despite its cowardice, and on the way it was taught lessons of perpetual significance. Israel had not faith to live under the protection of an Unseen Ruler, and the absolute theocracy had to be exchanged for the theocratic kingdom ; but that kingdom was made the means of teaching successive generations to look forward to a true and perfect kingdom. Israel as a nation became hopelessly apostate from its God ; it must die in the Exile. But God’s people was immortal. The oath of Israel’s Holy One could not be broken. *Art not thou from everlasting, O Lord my God, mine Holy One? we shall not die* (Hab. i. 12). And in the Return a chastened remnant was raised to a new and purer life. Everywhere we mark the unbaffled

patience of God, bringing about His purpose, though man delays it by refusing to fulfil his part in the great design, nay resists it to the utmost of his feeble power; and as we read and ponder, we are strengthened to believe that it is so now, and will be so for ever.

As we compare fulfilment with prophecy, and mark how the fulfilment unites, in ways unexpected and unimaginable, various elements of prophecy which seemed incompatible, different lines of thought which seemed when examined for a short distance only at any particular point, to be parallel, and not convergent; we learn a lesson of inestimable instruction for our view of the ultimate consummation of God's purposes in the future. We learn that it is our duty to hold firmly and faithfully to every element of revealed truth, not abandoning one part of it because it is unwelcome, or because it seems to us, in our limited view of it, and to our finite capacities, to be irreconcilable with another part of it, but clinging fast to all, in the assurance that there will be an ultimate and complete reconciliation of all in

“The one far-off divine event
To which the whole creation moves.”

When we realise, I repeat, how marvellously fulfilment transcended prophecy, we are strengthened to believe with confident hope that as it has been, so it will be; and we may rest assured that the consummation of the Divine purposes will be not less but

more glorious and complete than we dare to hope or fancy.

(3) But beside the evidential value of the Old Testament, beside its manifold importance for the interpretation of the New Testament, it has a permanent practical value *for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness*. This of course is commonly admitted ; yet I doubt if the distinctive value and the specific lessons of the Old Testament are as fully recognised as they should be. It contains many lessons which are not repeated but assumed in the New Testament ; or which, if repeated, are “writ large” in the Old Testament under different circumstances and with distinct illustrations. The national lessons of the Old Testament are not, and could not be, repeated in the New. Take, for example, the ideas of national solidarity and the continuity of national life, which are so strongly emphasised in the prophets and the Psalms, and the recognition of which is so essential to their right understanding. The ‘personality’ of the nation, its calling, its functions, its relation to God as a nation, are ideas which are presented with a living force in the Old Testament. The life, the personality, the character of the nation pass from generation to generation down the centuries. The individuality of the members of the nation is an important truth which only came to be fully understood by slow degrees ; but individualism is not the whole truth, and the Old Testament reminds us of the com-

plementary truth, that the individual is but a member of the larger whole, which has a life, a character, a duty, and a destiny peculiarly its own.

No doubt this truth reappears in the New Testament in the doctrine of the Christian Church; but are we right in regarding the nation of Israel simply as the prototype of the Christian Church, in spiritualising, as is so commonly done, all that is said of Israel, and applying it either by analogy to the individual life, or generally to the Church? Are there not still distinctive lessons to be learnt for national life and conduct from the ideal offered to Israel and the laws by which its progress towards that ideal was to be regulated?

(4) Socialism is in the air all round us, with many noble aspirations for a better state of society and truer relations of man to man, mingled with many crude and chimerical ideas as to the means by which the end is to be attained, and not seldom proposing to right an old wrong by the perpetration of a new one. Is it not at least possible that there are some principles exhibited in the divinely ordered commonwealth of Israel, and emphasised in the social teaching of the prophets, which need to be brought to light, and applied to the solution of our present difficulties?

(5) I need say but little of the personal lessons which the Old Testament offers. Yet it is worth while to remark that some religious ideas are more readily apprehended in their more elementary forms; and

that the prophets enforce simple lessons of man's duty to God and his neighbours, which can never be obsolete. *To do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God* is a practical code of ethics and religion which would regenerate the world. In this connexion let me quote words which are true in a deeper sense than their author would himself have admitted. "As long as the world lasts, all who want to make progress in righteousness will come to Israel for inspiration, as to the people who have had the sense for righteousness most glowing and strongest; and in hearing and reading the words Israel has uttered for us, carers for conduct will find a glow and a force they could find nowhere else. As well imagine a man with a sense for sculpture not cultivating it by the help of the remains of Greek art, or a man with a sense for poetry not cultivating it by the help of Homer and Shakespeare, as a man with a sense for conduct not cultivating it by the help of the Bible!"¹

Yes, it is true! but why? Is it not because One greater than Israel is here?

Again, do we sufficiently value the "exhilarating" influence of Old Testament prophecy, and yield ourselves to its elevating power? Imagination as well as reason is the handmaid of religion, and I doubt if we have cultivated the religious imagination as we ought to have done by the help of the prophets.

The devotional value of the Psalter is of course

¹ M. Arnold, *Literature and Dogma*, p. 42.

universally acknowledged. I need hardly refer to the ever fresh power of the Psalms as the language of the soul outpouring its inmost self to God ; but there is just one point to which I should like to refer. Have we not lost the intense joyousness of the Old Testament saints ? With all their limitations of view and hope, with all that was hard and rough in life, there is in the Psalter a perpetual strain of gladness which puts us utterly to shame. It is echoed in the New Testament ; yet there, in the Psalter, we seem to find it in all its fresh and bright simplicity. We use the old words still ; yet have we not lost something of the spirit, though God should be nearer to us now in the light of the Incarnation than He was in those early days, and heaven's glory illuminates our path as it did not then ?

Is it necessary, in speaking of the use of the Old Testament in the Christian Church, to add the caution that the Old Testament is not the New ? We must not fall into the error of confounding the Testaments and supposing, as some have done, that all Christian doctrine is contained already in the Old Testament. We shall not appeal to the Old Testament for the proof of distinctively Christian doctrines, although we may find corroboration of them there, and may recognise that much that was unintelligible at the time was implicitly contained in the Divine message. *Norum Testamentum in Vetere latet.* Nor, again, shall we suppose that anything contrary to the mind of Christ can possibly be

sanctioned for the Christian Church by an appeal to the authority of the Old Testament.

For all the law and the prophets are valid for the Christian Church only as they are ‘fulfilled’ in Christ. ‘Fulfilment’ is not to be limited to prophecy only. When Christ said that He came *to fulfil the law and the prophets* He doubtless meant to include the whole of the Old Testament Scriptures. All those Scriptures, as the utterance of Divine truth through human instruments, awaited a fulfilment, and it is as interpreted by that fulfilment that they are commended to the study of the Christian Church. ‘Fulfilment’ is the completion of what was before imperfect ; it is the realisation of what was shadowy ; it is the development of what was rudimentary ; it is the union of what was isolated and disconnected ; it is the perfect growth from the antecedent germ. Christ came to disengage eternal truths from the limited forms in which they had been hitherto expressed ; and He bids us look back upon those limited forms in the light of His teaching and work, and discern the eternal truths embodied in them. If we would understand the principle of their interpretation we must study the illustrations which Christ Himself gives of what He meant by “ fulfilling ” the law and the prophets. In them we see how He pierces through the outward form to the Divine truth of which the outward form was but the vehicle, how He discloses and affirms the inward spirit, how He raises all to the higher level of His own teaching.

Had the law forbidden murder? The prohibition rests ultimately on the principle of mutual love, which must exclude even the spirit of hatred. Had the law condemned adultery? That is but one limited application of the principle of purity, which must govern not merely action but thought. Had the law prohibited perjury? Fidelity to an oath is but one small part of the universal duty of truth between man and man. Had the law enforced a rough equality of justice by way of restraining revenge? The true restraint of revenge is to be found in the conquest of evil by self-sacrifice. Had the law allowed a limitation of love to fellow-countrymen and friends? Human love is the reflection of Divine love; Divine love is universal, and henceforth human love must be universal too.

Thus in each case the underlying principle is seized and enforced, and carried to its full development. The imperfect morality of an earlier age is left behind; the limited rules which were all that men could bear at first, but which were designed to raise them to higher things, are extended and expanded; a new and generous spirit is infused into the outward form.

Mark the emphatic assertion of the universality of this fulfilment. *Verily I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass away from the law, till all things be accomplished* (Matt. v. 18). There is no distinction of ceremonial and moral law; no classification of

precepts according to their supposed importance or insignificance. All is the reflection of Divine truth ; all has its appointed purpose in its own time ; all is to find its fulfilment. We may not be able to determine the significance of every element any more than the naturalist can explain the use of every physical organ, but the general drift and purpose of the whole are clear.

And for the Christian Church this is the canon of interpretation for the Old Testament. Very simple, yet very comprehensive it is, this principle of the spirit of Christ entering into the old order and "fulfilling" it ; yet how strangely Christians in all ages have ignored it ! What grievous scandals, nay what monstrous crimes perpetrated in the name of religion, would have been avoided if it had but been realised as an unalterable and universal principle that the Christian Church can never find authority in the Old Testament for any act that is at variance with the spirit of the Gospel. It is not our danger now ; but it is an error which has been fruitful of evils in past ages. It is, we are told, even now a danger among new converts from heathenism.

When we turn from our Lord's teaching to that of His Apostles we find everywhere that the Old Testament is accepted as the natural inheritance of the Christian Church ; and further, that the old words are used in all the fresh intensity of meaning with which the new revelation had shown them to be instinct.

The life and death of Christ have given a deeper

insight into the holiness of God, a new standard and motive for the holiness which He desires in man. Yet the Christian's call to holiness of life can still be enforced by an appeal to the authority of the old Scriptures—*It is written, Ye shall be holy; for I am holy* (1 Pet. i. 16). Old promises can still be urged as the ground for trustful contentedness (Heb. xiii. 5, 6), but they come with all the added force of Christ's own teaching and example. The old exhortation to recognise the loving hand of God in the discipline of chastisement is still valid, but it receives fresh illumination from the revelation of the fatherhood of God in Christ (Heb. xii. 5, 6). Old warnings of the certain punishment which awaits a contemptuous and wilful disregard of God's working in the world are still significant, and they come with augmented emphasis under new circumstances (Acts xiii. 40, 41). Old laws of Divine government are still in force, but it is in the higher sphere of spiritual experience that they find their application (1 Cor. i. 19; iii. 19, 20). Words which of old expressed the principle of stability for the life of nations are expanded to convey a spiritual meaning, and express the essential principle of the inner life (Rom. i. 17; Gal. iii. 11).

But what need is there to multiply instances? The whole Old Testament is regarded as transfigured, deepened, spiritualised, not by the arbitrary imposition upon its words of a sense which they do not bear, but because, in the clearer light of Christ's fulfilment of that old dispensation, they can and must convey to

us more of that Divine truth which at best they can but partially and imperfectly express.

This principle of ‘fulfilment’ is a far-reaching and fruitful principle. Apply it to the teaching of which the Old Testament is full, concerning sin and righteousness and judgment, “the cardinal elements in the determination of man’s spiritual state,” concerning which the Advocate comes to convict the world (John xvi. 8). The old words cannot for us have simply their ‘original sense.’ They must speak with augmented depth and solemnity to those who have seen the condemnation of sin and the standard of righteousness and the declaration of judgment set forth in the life and death and resurrection of Christ (Rom. iii. 25, 26).

Those glowing words in which the Psalmists express their calm confidence in the loving care of God, their passionate yearnings for a closer approach to His presence, their wonderful sense that man’s only true happiness consists in fellowship with Him, though athwart it all lies the dark shadow of the breach of that communion by death,—a shadow which in moments of exultant hopefulness seems to be dispersed by a ray of the coming light, only to return again with all its chilling horror,—those marvellous outbursts of praise in which all creation is joined in one jubilant harmony of adoration ; do they not all flash and sparkle for us with a new glory in the light of Christ’s revelation of the Father, since *the Son of God is come, and hath given us an under-*

standing, that we know Him that is true, and that dark shadow of death has been for ever banished since He has overcome death and opened unto us the gate of everlasting life?

Christ puts the Old Testament into the hands of His Church, and bids her interpret and use it as 'fulfilled' in Him. The truth is simple and familiar, and yet it is worth while to insist upon it, because it is just the truth which will enable us to look with calmness and patience upon the critical investigations which are causing pain and anxiety to many who love God's Holy Word. It is independent of those investigations ; it rises above them into a higher sphere ; it is not antagonistic to them nor they to it. Critical research must be fearlessly, patiently, and honestly pursued. We must be prepared to accept its results when they have stood the test of searching cross-examination. But critical research cannot shake or overthrow the certainty that our Lord bids us take the Old Testament for our spiritual instruction as 'fulfilled' in Him ; interpreted, spiritualised, and endowed with living force and power in the light of the Revelation which He came to be and to manifest.

The 'deeper meaning' in the words of Holy Scripture is not, however, to be gained by arbitrary allegorising, or by private interpretations of isolated phrases torn from their context, but by patient study of the methods in which God spake in the prophets to the fathers of old time, illuminated by the message which He has in these latter days communicated in

the person of His Son. And that there is such a deeper meaning is no matter for surprise. How, indeed, could it be otherwise? It was God who spake *in the prophets*; it is God who speaks *in a Son*.

Every Divine word must be of eternal import. God's truth does not vary; there is no mutability of purpose in the eternal present of the Divine mind. As in creation so in revelation

“Was and is and will be, are but is.
. But we that are not all,
As parts, can see but parts, now this now that,
And live perforce from thought to thought.”

Human words, even inspired words, can express no more than some infinitesimal fragment of the infinite mind of God. But any worthy conception of inspiration must at least include this idea, that the inspired words so correspond to the Divine truth which they reveal that they are capable of disclosing more and more of it as men are able to receive it.

Man could only be educated by degrees. The childhood of the race, like the childhood of the individual, must be taught as it could bear it. But the lessons of childhood grow with advancing years. Words cannot continue to mean for us only what they meant at first. They must expand with the expanding mind.

God's great book of Nature remains unchanged; but it speaks to men with different voices in successive ages. A Copernicus, a Newton, a Darwin

arises, and points out new laws which co-ordinate and explain phenomena, and Nature's lessons can be read more clearly. The words of the poet, the works of the painter, contain and teach more of truth and beauty than poet or painter knew or intended themselves, for the intuition of genius perceives truth unconsciously, and records it for those who come after to interpret.

So the old words of revelation, because they were the reflection of the Divine mind and will, contained a larger meaning in them than was at once perceptible; and Christ has come and fulfilled them, infused new force and meaning into them, shown us how they express more of the *grace and truth* which He came to bring in all its fulness. It is not that the words of the Old Testament "palter with us in a double sense." It is that the Word of God is *living and energetic*, possessed, in virtue of its essential nature, of a springing and germinant vitality.

I have endeavoured in these lectures to present some idea of the views with regard to the origin of the Old Testament on its human side to which modern study and research are leading us. I have endeavoured to express my strong conviction that these views are not incompatible with a firm and full belief in its Divine inspiration, though it is no longer a verbal and mechanical inspiration, but a vitalising and "dynamic" inspiration which must be

acknowledged. The life is there; it can be felt and recognised, though we cannot analyse it or separate it from the body which it animates.

Lastly, I have endeavoured to commend the Old Testament to your study—your renewed and most earnest study,—for the sake of the light which it throws upon God's plan and purpose in the past and in the future, not less than for the help which it may give us for the present in our personal and social needs.

I have not attempted to single out and discuss, except incidentally, the difficulties raised by modern criticism of the Old Testament. There is always a grave danger of exaggerating difficulties by taking them out of their proper context and proportion; and the best way of meeting difficulties often is to survey the ground upon which we may securely plant our feet in order fearlessly to estimate their real importance.

If in what I have said I have given pain to any, or put forward what seem to them very imperfect conceptions of that unique Book which we all alike desire to reverence as the Word of God, I crave their pardon. If by untrue or inadequate representations I have dishonoured the Word of God, I humbly crave His pardon.

But I cannot but think that here as elsewhere it is true that

“The old order changeth, yielding place to new,
And God fulfils Himself in many ways;”

and that through freer methods of the study of the Bible He is leading us to a truer conception of what the Bible is, and a fuller knowledge of what is His message to us in the present day through the Bible.

At least we are agreed in this, that *these things are not a vain thing for us; for they are our life:* and “the Ariadne-thread which shall lead us through the labyrinth of all perplexities is the faith that *Christ is risen indeed,*” and that *He has not left us orphans,* but is indeed still present with us in the living power of that *Spirit of truth* whom He has sent to *guide us into all the truth.*

NOTES

NOTE A, p. vi.

CRITICAL STUDY OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

In the interval between the delivery and the publication of these lectures, Professor Driver's long-expected *Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament* appeared. It is a great pleasure to be able to point to a work which treats the Old Testament at once with due reverence and with complete candour. Whatever may be thought of the conclusions at which he arrives with regard to the questions of Old Testament criticism, there ought to be but one opinion as to the spirit in which he approaches them. The judicious reserve and calm sobriety of the book must win a patient hearing for it even where the views put forward in it are most unwelcome. Such arguments must, it will be felt, be met by arguments, and not by denunciation. I venture to make a somewhat lengthy extract from the preface, as it sums up most forcibly the principles which I have desired to express in these Lectures.

"It is not the case that critical conclusions, such as those expressed in the present volume, are in conflict either with the Christian creeds or with the

articles of the Christian faith. Those conclusions affect not the *fact* of revelation, but only its *form*. They help to determine the stages through which it passed, the different phases which it assumed, and the process by which the record of it was built up. They do not touch either the authority or the inspiration of the Scriptures of the Old Testament. They imply no change in respect to the Divine attributes revealed in the Old Testament; no change in the lessons of human duty to be derived from it; no change as to the general position (apart from the interpretation of particular passages) that the Old Testament points forward prophetically to Christ. That both the religion of Israel itself, and the record of its history embodied in the Old Testament, are the work of men whose hearts have been touched, and minds illumined, in different degrees, by the Spirit of God, is manifest: but the recognition of this truth does not decide the question of the author by whom, or the date at which, particular parts of the Old Testament were committed to writing; nor does it determine the precise literary character of a given narrative or book. . . .

"It is probable that every form of composition known to the ancient Hebrews was utilised as a vehicle of Divine truth, and is represented in the Old Testament. . . .

"There is a human factor in the Bible, which, though quickened and sustained by the informing Spirit, is never wholly absorbed or neutralised by it, and the limits of its operation cannot be ascertained by an arbitrary *a priori* determination of the methods of inspiration; the only means by which they can be ascertained is by an assiduous and comprehensive study of the facts presented by the Old Testament itself. . . .

"Criticism in the hands of Christian scholars does not banish or destroy the inspiration of the Old Testament ; it *presupposes* it ; it seeks only to determine the conditions under which it operates, and the literary forms through which it manifests itself ; and it thus helps us to form truer conceptions of the methods which it has pleased God to employ in revealing Himself to His ancient people of Israel, and in preparing the way for the fuller manifestation of Himself in Christ Jesus."

NOTE B, p. 41

THE DATE OF THE PSALMS

THESE words were written before the publication of Professor Cheyne's Bampton Lectures on *The Origin and Religious Contents of the Psalter*. In these Lectures he maintains the view that the whole of the Psalter, with the possible exception of Ps. xviii., is post-exilic. Even of Ps. xviii. he speaks with hesitation. He "cannot complain if some prefer to regard the Psalm as an imaginative work of the exile" (p. 206). Ten or twelve Psalms he assigns to the period of the Restoration ; twenty-seven, more or less, to the Maccabaean period ; some sixteen to the pre-Maccabaean Greek period. But it is to the Persian period, and especially the later part of it, that we are indebted for most of the Psalms.

Professor Cheyne's arguments leave me unconvinced. He starts from the assumption that Simon the Maccabee edited the two last books of the Psalter, soon after 142 B.C. (p. 12). But he admits that "we have no ancient record" of such editing, though the prosaic

author of 1 Maccabees "warms into poetry in telling of the prosperity of Israel under Simon," and "makes it the climax of his description that he 'made glorious the sanctuary, and multiplied the vessels of the temple' (1 Macc. xiv. 15)." The argument from silence is no doubt precarious; but the fact must be faced that "our one first-class authority for the Maccabaean period" is absolutely silent about that "reconstitution of the temple-psalmody" to which "we may, nay, we must conjecture that . . . the noble high priest and virtual king, Simon, devoted himself"; and is equally silent about the editing of the last two books of the Psalter which we are told to connect with it.

Thus the foundation and starting-point of Professor Cheyne's argument is a conjecture, or rather series of conjectures; and though it is true, as he tells us, that "the dark places of history must sometimes be illumined by the torch of conjecture," it cannot be too carefully remembered that that torch is not daylight, and is extremely apt to cast misleading shadows.

The history of the Canon is admittedly so obscure, that it would be rash dogmatically to assert the impossibility of such a late date for the final arrangement of the last two books of the Psalter. But in spite of Professor Cheyne's arguments to the contrary, I cannot but think that (1) the language of the Prologue to Ecclesiasticus with its implicit distinction between canonical and deutero-canonical books; (2) the probable date and actual character of the Septuagint Version of the Psalter; (3) the use made of Pss. xcvi., cv., cvi., exxxii., in 1 Chr. xvi. 8-36; 2 Chr. vi. 41, 42; (4) the silence of 1 Macc.; when taken together create a very strong presumption against the possibility of so late a date for the last two books of the Psalter.

In estimating the weight of historical probabilities, the arguments must be taken all together, and not separately ; and taken together, they point distinctly in the opposite direction to Professor Cheyne's conjecture.

Starting from his conjectural hypothesis, Professor Cheyne proceeds to fix the probable dates of particular Psalms. He assigns some seventeen Psalms in Books iv. and v. to the Maccabaean period, and about seven more to the pre-Maccabaean Greek period. Some of these Psalms may plausibly enough be thought to reflect the circumstances of the Maccabaean age, and if there are Maccabaean Psalms in the Psalter at all, it is natural to look for some of them in what is undoubtedly, in the main, the latest part of the Psalter. But it may be questioned whether these Psalms cannot equally well be explained from the circumstances of other periods, and whether there are not conspicuous features of the Maccabaean age which are absent. And his treatment of Ps. cxxxvii. is an example of the arbitrary criticism into which Professor Cheyne is forced by his theory of the date of these books. If any Psalm bears upon the face of it clear indications of the time at which it was composed, it is this Psalm. The writer and those for whom he speaks are still smarting under the fresh recollection of the sufferings of the Exile. But this will not suit Professor Cheyne's theory. "So striking a poem, if composed soon after the Return, would have found a home in the 3d Book of the Psalms." Why so is not quite clear, for Pss. xciii., xcv.—c. are placed about 516 B.C. But Ps. cxxxvii. must be regarded as a 'dramatic lyric,' and assigned to the age of Simon.

It is, however, in the denial of the existence of

pre-exilic Psalms in the Psalter (with the possible exception of Ps. xviii.) that Professor Cheyne's criticism is most arbitrary. That religious poetry existed before the Exile is certain. I must decline to abandon the evidence of Ps. cxxxvii. 3, 4, on this point, and it is supplemented by the reference to the ancient praises of Israel in the Temple in Is. lxiv. 11, and by such a passage as Jer. xxxiii. 11. The Lamentations, which Professor Cheyne allows to have been written in the Exile, are, if I am not mistaken, artificial in style as well as in form. They are clear evidence that the art of writing sacred poetry had been long and largely practised. There is then an *a priori* probability that the Psalter contains pre-exilic Psalms. It would be strange, indeed, if none of the pre-exilic Psalms had been preserved. In the first place then, at least those Psalms which contain a definite reference to the king, such as ii., xviii., xx., xxi., xl., lxi., lxiii., lxxii., presumably belong to the period of the monarchy. Why, except in the interests of a theory, should Ps. ii. be regarded as a dramatic lyric, written long after the Return, by a poet who throws himself back into the age of David or Solomon? Surely, if evidence of tone and style are worth anything at all, this Psalm must have been written in view of actual facts. In the prophets we find Messianic hopes, such as those which are expressed in this Psalm, springing out of and closely connected with the circumstances of the time. Why should we assume that it is otherwise in the Psalter? The reference of Pss. xlv. and lxxii. to Ptolemy Philadelphus is singularly unsatisfactory from every point of view. Why should Pss. xx., xxi., lxi., lxiii. be referred to Judas or Simon? Professor Cheyne by no means disposes of the objection that the title of king was studiously avoided by these

princes, and only assumed by Aristobulus and his successors (105 B.C.)

Further, Pss. xlvi., xlviii., lxxv., lxxvi. may much more naturally be referred to the deliverance of Jerusalem from Sennacherib, than "at the earliest, to one of the happier parts of the Persian age." We are told that "the Jewish Church in Isaiah's time was far too germinal to have sung these expressions of daring monotheism and impassioned love for the temple." If this means that these Psalms soar far above the belief of the average Israelite of the time, I am quite ready to admit it. But that is no argument against their having been composed by Isaiah, or a poet fired with Isaiah's enthusiasm and insight, and used in the public celebration of the deliverance of Zion. Do all those who join in a Church hymn appropriate its full meaning? But if it means that there is anything in these Psalms in advance of Isaiah's theology, I deny the fact. It may be remarked by the way, that it is distinctly *not* "impassioned love for the temple" which inspires Pss. xlvi. and xlviii., but admiring love for the *city*, which has been so signally delivered; and the thought of these Psalms is in full accord with Isaiah's teaching on the inviolability of Zion. Professor Cheyne will hardly allow an argument from quotations, but it appears to me quite certain that Lam. ii. 15 unites Ps. xlviii. 2 and Ps. l. 2.

If these Psalms can securely be claimed for the age of the kingdom, they may carry many others with them. Into the question of Davidic Psalms I will not enter here. But I observe that Professor Cheyne "says for himself that he cannot divide sharply between the age of David, and that, say, of Isaiah" (p. 191), and for myself, I must still ask with Riehm, how David came to be regarded as the "sweet Psalmist of Israel," and how

so many Psalms came to be ascribed to him, unless he was really a Psalmist, and some of these Psalms were actually written by him?¹ What Professor Cheyne means by his “second David” (p. 194), I am at a loss to understand.

One result of Professor Cheyne’s criticism is to credit the obscure Persian period, and especially the later part of it, with the production of the greater part of the Psalter. To assign so many of the Psalms, including some of the highest poetical merit and the most varied character, to a period of which so little is really known, is exceedingly precarious. On linguistic grounds, moreover, it is highly questionable. While it is no doubt possible that later Psalmists imitated earlier models, it seems improbable that we should possess only the imitations, and that the diction of the Psalms which are presumed to be very late should not show more traces of changes which there is reason to believe were passing over the language.

To consider the bearing of the religious contents of the Psalter upon its date would lead me far beyond the limits of a note. But there are one or two points on which I venture to offer the briefest remark. The free use of the name Jehovah in the 4th and 5th Books of the Psalter is in strong contrast to the avoidance of Divine names in 1 Macc.; and certainly, if the author of 1 Macc. at all reflects the spirit of the age, this is one argument against the hypothesis that these books were arranged by Simon. Further, it still seems to me that considerably more than a century must be allowed for the growth and developments of religious thought between the canonical Psalms and the Psalms of Solomon.

There is, moreover, no little force in the objection

¹ *Einleitung in das A. T.*, ii. 190.

which Riehm urges to the theory of a late post-exilic date for the majority of the Psalms. It is admitted, he says, even by Reuss, that the Psalms show a spirit akin to the spirit of the Gospel, and that the same conceptions of God's nature and man's duty as are found in the Psalms are to be found in the Prophets. And yet we are asked to believe that this spirit akin to the Gospel is not the spirit of the prophetic age, but the spirit of a Judaism which was binding itself more and more closely to the letter of the law, and sinking more and more deeply into a righteousness of works. Judaism might make use of the treasures of song derived from ancient times, but it could not have produced them.¹

NOTE C, pp. 98, 104

ALLEGORY AND MYTH

I HAVE allowed the word *allegory*, which I originally used, to remain, as being less liable to misunderstanding than *myth*. But if the distinction drawn between *myth* and *allegory* by Bishop Westcott in his essay on the Myths of Plato were generally recognised, and the term *myth* no longer regarded as conveying the idea of something unreal, but understood in its technical sense, *myth* would be the more appropriate word to use.

“A myth,” he writes, “in its true technical sense is the instinctive popular representation of an idea. ‘A myth,’ it has been said, ‘springs up in the soul as a germ in the soil: meaning and form are one; the history is the truth.’ Thus a myth, properly so called, has points of contact with a symbol, an allegory, and a

¹ *Einleitung in das A. T.*, ii. 196.

legend, and is distinguished from each. Like the symbol, it is the embodiment and representation of a thought. But the symbol is isolated, definite, and absolute. The symbol, and the truth which it figures, are contemplated apart. The one suggests the other. The myth, on the other hand, is continuous, historical, and relative. The truth is seen in the myth, and not separated from it. The representation is the actual apprehension of the reality. The myth and the allegory, again, have both a secondary sense. Both half hide and half reveal the truth which they clothe. But in the allegory the thought is grasped first and by itself, and is then arranged in a particular dress. In the myth, thought and form come into being together; the thought is the vital principle which shapes the form; the form is the sensible image which displays the thought. The allegory is the conscious work of an individual fashioning the image of a truth which he has seized. The myth is the unconscious growth of a common mind, which witnesses to the fundamental laws by which its development is ruled. The meaning of an allegory is prior to the construction of the story: the meaning of a myth is first capable of being separated from the expression in an age long after that in which it had its origin. The myth and the legend have more in common. Both spring up naturally. Both are the unconscious embodiments of popular feeling. Both are, as it seems, necessary accompaniments of primitive forms of society. The legend stands in the same relation to history and life as the myth to speculation and thought. The legend deals with a fact as outward, concrete, objective. The myth deals with an idea or the observation of a fact as inward, abstract, subjective. The tendency of the legend is to go ever farther from the simple circum-

stances from which it took its rise. The tendency of the myth is to express more and more clearly the idea which it foreshews."¹

Undoubtedly in the narrative of the Fall "the representation was the actual apprehension of the reality," and the truth was seen in the narrative, and not separated from it. Whatever may have been the origin of the narrative, whether or not it was brought from the Mesopotamian home of the race, it has been adopted by inspiration, and stamped with a Divine authority, as teaching us what we can know of "man's first disobedience," and the entry of sin into the world by the opposition of man's will to God's.

Exception is sometimes taken to the application of the term *myth* or *allegory* to the story of the Fall, as though it of necessity implied a doubt as to the essential reality of the truth conveyed by the story. I desire most emphatically to disclaim any such intention. But I do hold that it is legitimate to maintain that this narrative is not to be understood as literal history any more than the visions of the Apocalypse are to be understood as literal descriptions of heaven. For us, the underlying truth, and not the outward form in which that truth is clothed, is the essential thing.

¹ *Essays in the History of Religious Thought in the West*, p. 3 ff.

THE END

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